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THE

AGE OF REASON.

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BY THOMAS PAINE.

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LIFE OF THOMAS PAINE.

THOMAS PAINE was born on the 29th January, 1736, when George II. was King of England and in the heat of quarrel with Frederick Prince of Wales. Thomas Paine died on the 8th June, 1809, when King George III. was in full and bitter enmity with George Prince of Wales. In the seventy-one years which have passed since Paine's death bigotry has been busy with his name. In the twenty years which preceded his death hundreds of booksellers and newsmen were sent to gaol for selling or being found in possession of his works. As a politician Paine had declared war against kings, and as an unbeliever against churches, and the pulpit united with the throne to defile his memory. Foolish bigots call Thomas Paine an Atheist—in truth he was a Deist and one who did not deny a future state of existence. Paine's father was a Quaker and staymaker. After a little staymaking, a little work in the excise, and some teaching, Paine, when about 39 years of age, went to America. He got there in a time of turmoil when the Boston Ports' Bill had driven

Massachusetts wild, and Colonel Washington of Virginia was preparing to raise a regiment to aid the old Bay State. At first Paine settled in the Quaker City, obtaining literary work in Pennsylvania with Mr. Aitkin, a bookseller, but his pen was soon to find more stirring employ. The Tory Government of poor mad George III. believed, or professed to believe, that with a regiment of the Guards it would be easy to sweep New England. General Gage, who commanded at Boston, was soon undeceived. In April, 1775, he determined to destroy some colonial military stores in magazine at Concord, a few miles from the metropolis of Massachusets. The British regulars in gay uniforms marched out to merry tunes, contempt for the colonists pervading officers and men. But at Lexington Green these drilled soldiers, hired servants of a bad Government, fired on the local yeomanry, and the fire came back. Each farm sent its "minute" men, each ditch was a rifle pit, each hedge held a skirmisher. King George's troops were checked, the colonists they sneered at drove them back. America was awakening; the Lexington skirmish, the shameful march back, now at last a very race for life, and the King's general, Gage, is besieged by the rough farm men who were till now King George's subjects, and even now they hardly dream of being anything else.

The militia Colonel, George Washington, had written only a few weeks before as to independence: "I am well satisfied that no such thing is desired by any thinking man in all North America." Thomas Paine's pen was now the very mightiest of weapons. He boldly advocated the separation of the united colonies from the mother country. He defied the old monarchy in the name of the new republic. His first trumpet-note was in the publication of "Common Sense," which produced an enormous effect on both sides of the Atlantic. It said for men in Philadelphia that which men in Boston hoped but dared hardly think; it put in clear defiant words that which some down New Orleans way were as much opposed to as were the representatives of the Court of St. James itself. Few pamphlets have had an effect like this; it was the *reveillée* sharply sounded to a whole people. It stirred the New York traders, roused the steady-going denizens of the city of brotherly love into a quick step along the banks of the Schuylkill; it made the dwellers on the Mississippi feel that in the sterile east and far-off north there was manhood too big to bend the knee longer to crowned lunacy 3,000 miles away. What Paine commenced in "Common Sense" he followed up right vigorously, and the 4th July, 1776, with its grand Declaration of Independence, was but the

mighty flame from the spark which Paine had fanned into fire. Through the gloomy, the wearying, and often doubtful struggle, Thomas Paine cast in his lot with George Washington, hungry sometimes, footsore often, now and again heartsore and almost despairing, but never quite beaten. And so the revolution went on until the surrender at Yorktown sealed the defeat of the British Government. Paine's services were acknowledged in formal fashion by resolution of the Pennsylvanian Legislature in 1775; by letter from George Washington in 1783; and by resolution of the Congress of the United States of America in 1785. But Paine's services to liberty have been most thoroughly acknowledged by the undying and undiminished hostility to his memory shown by the foes of liberty wherever the Anglo-Saxon language is spoken.

"The world is my country, and to do good is my religion."

In 1789 the assembly of the States General in France was the first mighty stride in the march of the French Revolution. The proceedings in France made the English aristocracy mad with fear. The channel was not so broad as the Atlantic. Paris was nearer Windsor than Philadelphia. Tory tyranny linked itself with every crowned despot in Europe that liberty

might be strangled in her very cradle. Prosecutions at home and menace abroad; the prison and the sword; but these might not be enough, and Burke's pen and tongue were added. To Burke's reflections on the revolution in France came as crushing answer Thomas Paine's famous "Rights of Man." Its printers were arrested, its publishers were fined and imprisoned, but it was none the less sold. Men read it in fields, watching for the constables as birds watch for the fowler. An enormous number of copies were sold, and each day some one was sent to gaol for having, or selling, or lending, or even for speaking of this terrible "Rights of Man." And Thomas Paine is elected member of the Assembly, and he sits to try a king. The Thetford staymaker's son judges the crowned Capet. And he has courage too—this Paine—courage to spare as well as to destroy; courage to pardon as well as to condemn. Paine condemned the King, but would have spared his life. The generous vote for mercy made extreme men suspicious. The whirl of the revolution made fierce by hunger, despair, and treachery, drew this foreigner into prison, and Paine narrowly escaped the guillotine. Now may he not rest? has he not done enough? He has wrestled with two monarchies—need a giant do more? Yes, there is still more to do—an old book which fetters human

thought, which has compelled an age of blind faith. And it is to challenge this that Thomas Paine pens his "Age of Reason."

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

THE AGE OF REASON.

It has been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject, and, from that consideration, had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it, could not admit of a question, even by those who disapproved of the work.

The circumstance that has now taken place in France, of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood, and of everything appertaining to compulsive systems of religion, and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary, lest in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself

I believe in one God, and no more, and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy.

But, lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any other church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christion, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolise power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise; they have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving, it consists in professing to believe what one does not believe.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and in order to qualify himself for that trade, he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive anything more destructive to morality than this?

Soon after I had published the pamphlet, "Common Sense," in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion. The adulterous connection of church and state, wherever it had taken place, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, had so effectually prohibited by pains and penalties every discussion upon established creeds, and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be changed, those subjects could not be brought fairly and openly before the world; but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priestcraft would be detected; and man would return to the pure, unmixed, and unadulterated belief of one God and no more.

Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals. The Jews have their Moses;

the Christians their Jesus Christ, their apostles and saints; and the Turks their Mahomet, as if the way to God were not open to every man alike.

Each of those churches show certain books, which they call *revelation*, or the word of God. The Jews say that their word of God was given by God to Moses, face to face; the Christians say that their word of God came by divine inspiration; and the Turks say that their word of God (the Koran) was brought by an angel from heaven. Each of these churches accuse the others of unbelief, and, for my own part, I disbelieve them all.

As it is necessary to fix right ideas to words, I will, before I proceed further into the subject, offer some observations on the word revelation. Revelation, when applied to religion, means something communicated *immediately* from God to man.

No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, if he pleases. But admitting, for the sake of a case, that something has been revealed to a certain person, and not revealed to any other person, it is revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be a revelation to all those persons. It is a revelation to the first person only, and *hearsay* to every other, and consequently they are not obliged to believe it.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas, to call anything a revelation that comes to us at second-hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication—after this it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner; for it was not a revelation made to *me*, and I have only his word for it that it was made to him.

When Moses told the children of Israel that he received the two tables of the commandments from the hand of God, they were not obliged to believe him, because they had no other authority for it than his telling them so; and I have no other authority for it than some historian telling me so. The commandments carry no internal evidence of divinity with them; they contain some good moral precepts, such as any man qualified to be a law-giver or legislator, could

produce himself, without having recourse to supernatural intervention.*

When I am told that the Koran was written in Heaven and brought to Mahomet by an angel the account comes too near the same kind of heresay evidence and second-hand authority as the former. I did not see the angel myself, and, therefore, I have a right not to believe it.

When also I am told that a woman, called the Virgin Mary, said, or gave out, that she was with child without any cohabitation with a man, and that her betrothed husband, Joseph, said that an angel told him so, I have a right to believe them or not; such a circumstance required a much stronger evidence than their bare word for it; but we have not even this—for neither Joseph nor Mary wrote any such matter themselves; it is only reported by others that *they said so*—it is heresay upon heresay, and I do not choose to rest my belief upon such evidence.

It is, however, not difficult to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ being the son of God. He was born when the heathen mythology had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story. Almost all the extraordinary men that lived under the heathen mythology were reputed to be the sons of some of their gods. It was not a new thing, at that time, to believe a man to have been celestially begotten; the intercourse of gods with women was then a matter of familiar opinion. Their Jupiter, according to their accounts, had cohabited with some hundreds; the story, therefore, has nothing in it either new, wonderful, or obscene; it was conformable to the opinions that then prevailed among the people called Gentiles, or Mythologists, and it was those people only that believed it. The Jews, who had kept strictly to the belief of one God, and no more, and who had always rejected the heathen mythology, never credited the story.

It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian church sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place in the first instance by making the reputed founder to be celestially

* It is, however, necessary to except the declaration which says that God VISITS THE SINS OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN; it is contrary to every principle of moral justice.

begotten. The trinity of gods that then followed was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand; the statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus; the deification of heroes changed into the canonisation of saints; the mythologists had gods for everything; the Christian mythologists had saints for everything; the church became as crowded with the one, as the Pantheon had been with the other, and Rome was the place of both. The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue; and it yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish the amphibious fraud

Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect to the *real* character of Jesus Christ.

He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before; by the Quakers since; and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any.

Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or anything else; not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his own writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people; and as to the account given at his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians having brought him into the world in a supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground.

The wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told, exceeds everything that went before it. The first part, that of the miraculous conception, was not a thing that admitted of publicity, and therefore the tellers of this part of the story had this advantage, that though they might not be detected, they could not be expected to prove it, because it was not one of those things that admitted of proof, and it was impossible that the person of whom it was told could prove it himself.

But the resurrection of a dead person from the grave, and

his ascension through the air, is a thing very different as to the evidence it admits of, to the invisible conception of a child in the womb. The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noon-day, to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which everybody is required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal; and as the public visibility of this last related act was the only evidence that could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground, because that evidence never was given. Instead of this, a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say they saw it, and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe the resurrection, and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. *So neither will I*, and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas.

It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter. The story, so far as relates to the supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who were the authors of it is as impossible for us now to know, as it is for us to be assured that the books in which the account is related, were written by the persons whose names they bear; the best surviving evidence we now have respecting this affair is the Jews. They are regularly descended from the people who live in the time this resurrection and ascension is said to have happened, and they say *it is not true.* It has long appeared to me a strange inconsistency to cite the Jews, as a proof of the truth of the story. It is just the same as if a man were to say, I will prove the truth of what I have told you by producing the people who say it is false.

That such a person as Jesus Christ existed, and that he was crucified, which was the mode of execution at that day, are historical relations strictly within the limits of probability. He preached most excellent morality and the equality of man; but he preached also against the corruptions and avarice of the Jewish priests, and this brought upon him the hatred and vengance of the whole order of

priesthood. The accusation which those priests brought against him, was that of sedition and conspiracy against the Roman government, to which the Jews were then subject and tributary; and it is not improbable that the Roman government might have some secret apprehension of the effects of his doctrine as well as the Jewish priests; neither is it improbable that Jesus Christ had in contemplation the delivery of the Jewish nation from the bondage of the Romans. Between the two, however, the virtuous Reformer and Revolutionist lost his life.

It is upon this plain narrative of facts, together with another case I am going to mention, that the Christian mythologists, calling themselves the Christian Church, have erected their fable, which for absurdity and extravagance is not exceeded by anything that is to be found in the mythology of the ancients.

The ancient mythologists tell us that the race of giants made war against Jupiter, and that one of them threw one hundred rocks against him at one throw; that Jupiter defeated him with thunder, and confined him afterwards under Mount Etna, and that every time the giant turns himself Mount Etna belches with fire. It is here easy to see that the circumstance of the mountain, that of its being a volcano, suggested the idea of the fable; and that the fable is made to fit and wind itself up with the circumstance.

The Christian mythologists tell us that their Satan made war against the Almighty, who defeated him, and confined him afterwards, not under a mountain, but in a pit. It is here easy to see that the first fable suggested the idea of the second; for the fable of Jupiter and the Giants was told many hundred years before that of Satan.

Thus far the ancient and the Christian mythologists differ very little from each other. But the latter have contrived to carry the matter much farther. They have contrived to connect the fabulous part of the story of Jesus Christ with the fable originating from Mount Etna; and, in order to make all the parts of the story tie together, they have taken to their aid the traditions of the Jews; for the Christian mythology is made up partly from the ancient mythology, and partly from the Jewish traditions.

The Christian mythologists, after having confined Satan in a pit, were obliged to let him out again to bring on the

sequel of the fable. He is then introduced into the garden of Eden in the shape of a snake or a serpent, and in that shape he enters into familiar conversation with Eve, who is no way surprised to hear a snake talk; and the issue of this *tête-a-tête* is, that he persuades her to eat an apple, and the eating of that apple damns all mankind. After giving Satan this triumph over the whole of creation, one would have supposed that the Church mythologists would have been kind enough to send him back again to the pit; or, if they had not done this, that they would have put a mountain upon him (for they say that their faith can remove a mountain), or have put him *under* a mountain, as the former mythologists had done, to prevent his getting again among the women, and doing more mischief. But instead of this they leave him at large, without even obliging him to give his parole—the secret of which is, that they could not do without him, and, after being at the trouble of making him, they bribed him to stay. They promised him ALL the Jews, ALL the Turks by anticipation, nine-tenths of the world besides and Mahomet in to the bargain. After this, who can doubt the bountifulness of the Christian mythology?

Having thus made an insurrection and a battle in heaven, in which none of the combatants could be either killed or wounded—put Satan into a pit—let him out again—given him a triumph over the whole creation—damned all mankind by the eating of an apple, these Christian mythologists bring the two ends of their fable together. They represent this virtuous and amiable man, Jesus Christ, to be at once both God and Man, and also the Son of God, celestially begotten, on purpose to be sacrificed, because they say that Eve in her longing had eaten an apple.

Putting aside everything that might excite laughter by its absurdity, or detestation by its profaneness, and confining ourselves merely to an examination of the parts, it is impossible to conceive a story more derogatory to the Almighty, more inconsistent with his wisdom, more contradictory to his power, than this story is.

In order to make for it a foundation to rise upon, the inventors were under the necessity of giving to the being whom they call Satan, a power equally as great, if not greater, than they attribute to the Almighty. They have not only given him the power of liberating himself from the

pit, after what they call his fall, but they have made that power increase afterwards to infinity. Before this fall they represent him only as an angel of limited existence, as they represent the rest. After his fall he becomes, by their account, omnipresent. He exists everywhere, and at the same time. He occupies the whole immensity of space.

Not content with this deification of Satan, they represent him as defeating, by stratagem, in the shape of an animal of the creation, all the power and wisdom of the Almighty. They represent him as having compelled the Almighty to the *direct necessity* either of surrendering the whole of the creation to the government and sovereignty of this Satan, or of capitulating for its redemption by coming down upon earth, and exhibiting himself upon a cross in the shape of a man.

Had the inventors of this story told it the contrary way—that is, had they represented the Almighty as compelling Satan to exhibit *himself on a cross*, in the shape of a snake, as a punishment for his new transgression, the story would have been less absurd—less contradictory. But instead of this, they make the transgressor triumph, and the Almighty fall.

That many good men have believed this strange fable, and lived very good lives under that belief (for credulity is not a crime), is what I have no doubt of. In the first place they were educated to believe it, and they would have believed anything else in the same manner. They are also many who have been so enthusiastically enraptured by what they conceived to be the infinite love of God to man, in making a sacrifice of himself, that the vehemence of the idea has forbidden and deterred them from examining into the absurdity and profaneness of the story. The more unnatural anything is, the more is it capable of becoming the object of dismal admiration.

But if objects for gratitude and admiration are our desire, do they not present themselves every hour to our eyes? Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we are born, a world furnished to our hands that cost us nothing? Is it we that light up the sun, that pour down the rain, and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we

sleep or wake, the vast machinery of the universe still goes on. Are these things, and the blessings they indicate in future, nothing to us? Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subjects than tragedy and suicide? Or is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable that nothing can flatter it but the sacrifice of the Creator?

I know that this bold investigation will alarm many, but it would be paying too great a compliment to their credulity to forbear it upon that account; the times and the subjects demand it to be done. The suspicion that the theory of what is called the Christian Church is fabulous, is becoming very extensive in all countries; and it will be a consolation to men staggering under that suspicion, and doubting what to believe, and what to disbelieve, to see the subject freely investigated. I therefore pass on to an examination of the books called the Old and New Testament.

These books, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation (which, by the bye, is a book of riddles that requires a revelation to explain it), are, we are told, the word of God. It is therefore proper for us to know who told us so, that we may know what credit to give the report. The answer to this question is, that nobody can tell, except that we tell one another so. The case, however, historically appears to be as follows:—

When the Church mythologists established their system, they collected all the writings they could find, and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us, whether such of the writing as now appear under the name of the Old and New Testament, are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.

Be this as it may, they decided by *vote* which of the books out of the collection they had made should be the WORD OF GOD, and which should not. They rejected several; they voted others to be doubtful, such as the books called the Apocrypha; and those books which had a majority of votes were voted to be the word of God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people since calling themselves Christians had believed otherwise, for the belief of the one comes from the vote of the other. Who the people were that did all this, we now know nothing of; they called themselves by the

general name of the Church, and this is all we know of the matter.

As we have no other external evidence or authority for believing those books to be the word of God, than what I have mentioned, which is no evidence or authority at all, I come, in the next place, to examine the internal evidence contained in the books themselves.

In the former part of this essay, I have spoken of revelation, I now proceed further with that subject, for the purpose of applying it to the books in question.

Revelation is a communication of something, which the person to whom that thing is revealed did not know before. For if I have done a thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to tell me I have done it, or seen it, nor to enable me to tell it, or to write it.

Revelation, therefore, cannot be applied to anything done upon earth, of which man himself is the actor, or the witness; and consequently all the historical and anecdotal parts of the Bible, which is almost the whole of it, is not within the meaning and compass of the word revelation, and therefore is not the word of God.

When Samson ran off with the gate-posts of Gaza, if he ever did so (and whether he did or did not is nothing to us), or when he visited his Delilah, or caught his foxes, or did anything else, what has revelation to do with these things? If they were facts he could tell them himself; or his secretary, if he kept one, could write them, if they were worth either telling or writing; and if they were fictions, revelation could not make them true: and whether true or not, we are neither the better nor the wiser for knowing them. When we contemplate the immensity of that Being who directs and governs the incomprehensible WHOLE, of which the utmost ken of human sight can discover but a part, we ought to feel shame at calling such paltry stories the word of God.

As to the account of the Creation, with which the book of Genesis opens, it has all the appearance of being a tradition which the Israelites had among them before they came into Egypt; and after their departure from that country, they put it at the head of their history, without telling (as it is most probable) that they did not know how they came by it. The manner in which the account opens

shows it to be traditionary. It begins abruptly; it is nobody that speaks; it is nobody that hears; it is addressed to nobody; it has neither first, second, nor third person; it has every criterion of being a tradition; it has no voucher, Moses does not take upon himself by introducing it with the formality he uses on other occasions, such as that of saying, "*The Lord spake unto Moses, saying.*"

Why it has been called the Mosaic account of the Creation I am at a loss to conceive. Moses, I believe, was too good a judge of such subjects to put his name to that account. He had been educated among the Egyptians, who were a people as well skilled in science, and particularly in astronomy, as any people of their day; and the silence and caution that Moses observes, in not authenticating the account, is a good negative evidence that he neither told it, nor believed it. The case is, that every nation of people had been world-makers, and the Israelites had as much right to set up the trade of world-making as any of the rest; and as Moses was not an Israelite, he might not choose to contradict the tradition. The account, however, is harmless; and this is more than can be said for many other parts of the Bible.

Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and tortuous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a Demon, than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalise mankind: and for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest everything that is cruel.

We scarcely meet with anything, a few phrases excepted, but what deserves either our abhorrence or our contempt, till we come to the miscellaneous parts of the Bible. In the anonymous publications, the Psalms, and the book of Job—more particularly in the latter—we find a great deal of elevated sentiment reverentially expressed of the power and benignity of the Almighty; but they stand on no higher rank than many other compositions on similar subjects, as well before that time as since.

The Proverbs, which are said to be Solomon's, though most probably a collection (because they discover a knowledge of life, which his situation excluded him from

knowing), are an instructive table of ethics. They are inferior in keenness to the proverbs of the Spaniards, and not more wise and economical than those of the American Franklin.

All the remaining parts of the Bible, generally known by the name of the Prophets, are the works of the Jewish poets and itinerant preachers, who mixed poetry, anecdotes, and devotion together: and those works still retain the air and style of poetry, though in translation.*

There is not throughout the whole book, called the Bible, any word that describes to us what we call a poet, or any word that describes what we call poetry. The case is, that the word *prophet*, to which latter times have affixed a new idea, was the Bible word for poet, and the word *prophesying* meant the art of making poetry. It also meant the art of playing poetry to a tune upon any instrument of music.

We read of prophesying with pipes, tabrets, and horns—of prophesying with harps, with psalteries, with cymbals, and with every other instrument of music then in fashion.

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* As there are many readers who do not see that a composition is poetry, unless to be in rhyme, it is for their information that I add this note.

Poetry consists principally in two things—imagery and composition. The composition of poetry differs from that of prose in the manner of mixing long and short syllables together. Take a long syllable out of a line of poetry, and put a short one in the room of it, or put a long syllable where a short one should be, and that line will loose its poetical harmony. It will have an effect upon the line like that of misplacing a note in a song.

The imagery in these books called the Prophets, appertains altogether to poetry. It is fictitious, and often extravagant, and not admissible in any other kind of writing than poetry.

To show that these writings are composed in poetical numbers, I will take ten syllables as they stand in the book, and make a line of the same number of syllables (heroic measure), that shall rhyme with the last word. It will then be seen that the composition of these books is poetical measure. The instance I shall produce is from Isaiah:—

"HEAR, O YE HEAVENS, AND GIVE EAR, O EARTH!"
'Tis God himself that calls attention forth.

Another instance I shall quote is from the mournful Jeremiah, to which I shall add two other lines, for the purpose of carrying out the figure, and showing the intention of the poet:—

"O! THAT MINE HEAD WERE WATERS, AND MINE EYES"
Were fountains, flowing like the liquid skies?
Then would I give the mighty flood release,
And weep a deluge for the human race.

Were we now to speak of prophesying with a fiddle, or with a pipe and tabor, the expression would have no meaning, or would appear ridiculous, and to some people contemptuous, because we have changed the meaning of the word.

We are told of Saul being among the *prophets*, and also that he prophesied; but we are not told what *they prophesied* nor what *he prophesied.* The case is, there was nothing to tell; for these prophets were a company of musicians and poets, and Saul joined in the concert, and this was called *prophesying.*

The account given of this affair, in the book called Samuel, is, that Saul met a *company* of prophets; a whole company of them! coming down with a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp, and that they prophesied, and that he prophesied with them. But it appears afterwards, that Saul prophesied badly—that is, he performed his part badly—for it is said, that an "*evil spirit from God*"* came upon Saul, and he prophesied.

Now, were there no other passage in the book called the Bible than this, to demonstrate to us that we have lost the original meaning of the word prophecy, and substituted another meaning in its place, this alone would be sufficient; for it is impossible to use and apply the word *prophesy*, in the place it is here used and applied, if we give to it the sense which latter times have affixed to it. The manner in which it is here used strips it of all religious meaning, and shows that a man might then be a prophet, or might *prophesy*, as he may now be a poet or a musician, without any regard to the morality or the immorality of his character. The word was originally a term of science, promiscuously applied to poetry and music, and not restricted to any subject upon which poetry and music might be exercised.

Deborah and Barak are called prophets, not because they predicted anything, but because they composed the poem or song that bears their name, in celebration of an act already done. David is ranked among the prophets, for he was a musician, and was also reputed to be (though perhaps very

* As those men, who call themselves divines and commentators, are very fond of puzzling one another, I leave them to contest the meaning of the first part of the phrase, that of AN EVIL SPIRIT FROM GOD. I keep to my text—I keep to the meaning of the word prophesy.

arroneously) the author of the Psalms. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not called prophets; it does not appear from any accounts we have, that they could either sing, play music, or make poetry.

We are told of the greater and the lesser prophets. They might as well tell us of the greater and the lesser God; for there cannot be degrees in prophesying consistently with its modern sense. But there are degrees in poetry, and therefore the phrase is reconcilable to the case, when we understand by it the greater and the lesser poets.

It is altogether unnecessary, after this to offer any observations upon what those men styled prophets have written. The axe goes at once to the root, by showing that the original meaning of the word has been mistaken, and consequently all the inferences that have been drawn from those books, the devotional respect that has been paid to them, and the labored commentaries that have been written upon them, under that mistaken meaning, are not worth disputing about. In many things, however, the writings of the Jewish poets deserve a better fate than that of being bound up, as they now are, with the trash that accompanies them, under the abused name of the word of God.

If we permit ourselves to conceive right ideas of things, we must necessarily affix the idea, not only of unchangeableness, but of the utter impossibility of any change taking place by any means or accident whatever, in that which we would honor with the name of the word of God; and therefore the word of God cannot exist in any written or human language.

The continually progressive change to which the meaning of words is subject, the want of an universal language, which renders translation necessary, the errors to which translations are again subject, the mistakes of copyists and printers, together with the possibility of wilful alteration, are of themselves evidences that human language, whether in speech or in print, cannot be the vehicle of the word of God. The word of God exists in something else.

Did the book, called the Bible, excel in purity of ideas and expression all the books that are now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith, as being the word of God, because the possibility would nevertheless

exist of my being imposed upon. But when I see throughout the greatest part of this book scarcely anything but a history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales, I cannot dishonor my Creator by calling it by his name.

Thus much for the Bible; I now go on to the book called the New Testament. The *New* Testament! that is the *new* will, as if there could be two wills of the Creator.

Had it been the object or the intention of Jesus Christ to establish a new religion, he would undoubtedly have written the system himself, or *procured it to be written* in his lifetime. But there is no publication extant authenticated with his name. All the books called the New Testament were written after his death. He was a Jew by birth and by profession; and he was the Son of God in like manner that every other person is—for the Creator is the father of all.

The first four books, called Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, do not give a history of the life of Jesus Christ, but only detached anecdotes of him. It appears from those books, that the whole time of his being a preacher was not more than eighteen months; and it was only during this short time that those men became acquainted with him. They make mention of him at the age of twelve years, sitting, they say, among the Jewish doctors, asking and answering them questions. As this was several years before their acquaintance with him began, it is most probable they had this anecdote from his parents. From this time there is no account of him for about sixteen years. Where he lived, or how he employed himself, during this interval is not known. Most probably he was working at his father's trade, which was that of a carpenter. It does not appear that he had any school education, and the probability is, that he could not write, for his parents were extremely poor, as appears from their not being able to pay for a bed when he was born.

It is somewhat curious, that the three persons whose names are the most universally recorded, were of very obscure parentage. Moses was a foundling; Jesus Christ was born in a stable; and Mahomet was a mule-driver. The first and the last of these men were founders of different systems of religion; but Jesus Christ founded no new system. He called men to the practice of moral virtues, and the belief

of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthrophy.

The manner in which he was apprehended shows that he was not much known at that time; and it shows also that the meetings he then held with his followers were in secret; and that he had given over or suspended preaching publicly. Judas could not otherwise betray him than by giving information where he was, and pointing him out to the officers that went to arrest him; and the reason for employing and paying Judas to do this, could arise only from the causes already mentioned, that of his not being much known, and living concealed.

The idea of his concealment not only agrees very ill with his reputed divinity, but associates with it something of pusillanimity, and his being betrayed, or in other words, his being apprehended, and consequently that he did not intend to be crucified.

The Christian mythologists tell us that Christ died for the sins of the world, and that he came on *purpose to die.* Would it not then have been the same if he had died of a fever, or of the small pox, of old age, or of anything else?

The declaratory sentence which, they say, was passed upon Adam, in case he ate the apple, was not that *thou shalt surely be crucified*, but *thou shalt surely die*—the sentence of death and not the manner of dying. Crucifixion, therefore, or any other particular manner of dying, made no part of the sentence that Adam was to suffer, and consequently, even upon their own tactics, it could make no part of the sentence that Christ was to suffer in the room of Adam. A fever would have done as well as a cross, if there was any occasion for either.

This sentence of death, which they tell us was thus passed upon Adam, must either have meant dying naturally—that is, ceasing to live, or have meant what these mythologists call damnation—and consequently, the act of dying on the part of Jesus Christ must, according to their system, apply as a prevention to one or other of these two *things* happening to Adam and to us.

That it does not prevent our dying is evident, because we all die; and if their accounts of longevity be true, men die faster since the crucifixion than before; and with respect to the second explanation (including with it the *natural death*

of Jesus Christ as a substitute for the *eternal death* or *damnation* of all mankind), it is impertinently representing the Creator as coming off, or revoking the sentence by a pun or a quibble upon the word *death*. That manufacturer of quibbles, St. Paul, if he wrote the books that bear his name, has helped this quibble on by making another quibble upon the word *Adam*. He makes there to be two Adams: the one who sins in fact, and suffers by proxy; the other who sins by proxy, and suffers in fact. A religion thus interlarded with quibble, subterfuge, and pun, has a tendency to instruct its professors in the practice of these arts. They acquire the habit without being aware of the cause.

If Jesus Christ was the being which those mythologists tell us he was, and that he came into this world to *suffer*, which is a word they sometimes use instead of to *die*, the only real suffering he could have endured would have been to *live*. His existence here was a state of excitement or transportation from Heaven, and the way back to his original country was to die. In fine, everything in this strange system is the reverse to what it pretends to be. It is the reverse of the truth, and I become so tired with examining into its inconsistencies and absurdities, and I hasten to the conclusion of it, in order to proceed to something better.

How much or what parts of the book called the New Testament were written by the persons whose names they bear, is what we can know nothing of, neither are we certain in what language they were originally written. The matters they now contain may be classed under two heads: anecdote and epistolary correspondence. The four books already mentioned, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are altogether anecdotal. They relate events after they had taken place. They tell what Jesus Christ did and said, and what others did and said to him; and in several instances they relate the same event differently. Revelation is necessarily out of the question with respect to those books, not only because of the disagreement of the writers, but because revelation cannot be applied to the relating of facts by the persons who saw them done, nor to the relating or recording of any discourse or conversation by those who heard it. The book called the Acts of the Apostles (an anonymous work), belongs also to the anecdotal part.

All the other parts of the New Testament, except the book

of enigmas, called the Revelations, are a collection of letters under the name of epistles; and the forgery of letters has been such a common practice in the world, that the probability is at least equal, whether they are genuine or forged. One thing, however, is much less equivocal, which is, that out of the matters contained in those books, together with the assistance of some old stories, the church has set up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue, in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty.

The invention of purgatory, and of the releasing of souls therefrom by prayers bought of the church with money, the selling of pardons, dispensations, and indulgencies, are revenue laws, without bearing that name or carrying that appearance. But the case nevertheless is, that those things derive their origin from the paroxysm of the crucifixion and the theory deduced therefrom, which was that one person could stand in the place of another, and could perform meritorious services for him. The probability, therefore, is, that the old theory or doctrine of what is called the redemption (which is said to have been accomplished by the act of one person in the room of another) was originally fabricated on purpose to bring forward and build all those secondary and pecuniary redemptions upon, and that the passages in the books, upon which the idea or theory of redemption is built, have been manufactured and fabricated for that purpose. Why are we to give this church credit when she tells us that those books are genuine in every part, any more than we give her credit for everything else she has told us, or for the miracles she says she has performed? That she *could* fabricate writings is certain, because she could write; and the composition of the writings in question is of that kind that anybody might do it, and that she *did* fabricate them is not more inconsistent with probability than that she should tell us, as she has done, that she could work and did work miracles.

Since then no external evidence can, at this long distance of time, be produced to prove whether the church fabricated the doctrines called redemption or not (for such evidence, whether for or against, would be subject to the same suspicion of being fabricated), the case can only be referred

to the internal evidence which the thing carries of itself, and this affords a very strong presumption of its being a fabrication. For the internal evidence is, that the theory or doctrine of redemption has for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice.

If I owe a person money and cannot pay him, and he threatens to put me in prison, another person can take the debt upon himself, and pay it for me; but if I have committed a crime, every circumstance of the case is changed, moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would offer itself. To suppose justice in this, is to destroy the principle of its existence, which is the thing itself; it is then no longer justice; it is indiscriminate revenge.

This single reflection will show that the doctrine of redemption is founded on a mere pecuniary idea, corresponding to that of the debt, which another person might pay; and as this pecuniary idea corresponds again with the system of second redemption, obtained through the means of money given to the church for pardons, the probability is that the same persons fabricated both the one and the other of those theories; and that, in truth, there is no such thing as redemption; that it is fabulous, and that man stands in the same relative condition with his Maker he ever did stand, since man existed, and that it is his greatest consolation to think so.

Let him believe this and he will live more consistently and morally than by any other system. It is by his being taught to contemplate himself as an outlaw, as an outcast, as a beggar, as a mumper, as one thrown, as it were, on a dunghill, at an immense distance from his Creator, and who must make his approaches by creeping and cringing to intermediate beings, that he conceives either a contemptuous disregard for everything under the name of religion, or becomes indifferent, or turns what he calls devout. In the latter case he consumes his life in grief, or the affectation of it; his prayers are reproaches; his humility is ingratitude; he calls himself a worm, and the fertile earth a dunghill, and all the blessing of life by the thankless name of vanities; he despises the choicest gift of God to man, the GIFT OF REASON; and having endeavored to force upon himself the belief of a system against which reason revolts, he ungrate-

fully calls it *human reason*, as if man could give reason to himself.

Yet with all this strange appearance of humility, and this contempt for human reason, he ventures into the boldest presumptions: he finds fault with everything; his selfishness is never satisfied; his ingratitude is never at an end. He takes on himself to direct the Almighty what to do, even in the government of the universe. He prays dictatorially; when it is sunshine he prays for rain, and when it is rain he prays for sunshine. He follows the same idea in everything that he prays for, for what is the amount of all his prayers, but an attempt to make the Almighty change his mind and act otherwise than he does? It is as if he were to say, Thou knowest not so well as I.

But some perhaps will say—are we to have no word of God—no revelation? I answer, Yes; there is a word of God—there is a revelation.

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD, and it is in *this word* which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.

Human language is local and changeable, and is therefore incapable of being used as the means of unchangeable and universal information. The idea that God sent Jesus Christ to publish, as they say, the glad tidings to all nations, from one end of the earth to the other, is consistent only with the ignorance of those who knew nothing of the extent of the world, and who believed, as those world-saviours believed and continued to believe for several centuries (and that in contradiction to the discoveries of philosophers, and the experience of navigators), that the earth was flat like a trencher, and that a man might walk to the end of it.

But how was Jesus Christ to make anything known to all nations? He could speak but one language, which was Hebrew; and there are in the world several hundred languages. Scarcely any two nations speak the same language or understand each other; and as to translations, every man who knows anything of languages, knows that it is impossible to translate from one language to another, not only without losing a great part of the original, but frequently of mistaking the sense; and besides all this, the art of printing was wholly unknown at the time Christ lived.

It is always necessary that the means that are to accomplish any end, be equal to the accomplishment of that end, or the end cannot be accomplished. It is in this that the difference between finite and infinite power and wisdom discovers itself. Man frequently fails in accomplishing his ends, from a natural inability of the power to the purpose, and frequently from the want of wisdom to apply power properly. The means it useth are always equal to the end; but human language, more especially as there is not an universal language, is incapable of being used as an universal means of unchangeable and uniform information, and therefore it is not the means that God useth in manifesting himself universally to man.

It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of *a word of God* can unite. The Creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not, it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds, and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

Do we want to contemplate his power?—We see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom?—We see it in the unchangable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence?—We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy?—We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is?—Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the Scripture called the Creation.

The only idea man can affix to the name of God, is that of a *first cause*, the cause of all things. And incomprehensible and difficult as it is for a man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it, from the ten-fold greater difficulty of disbelieving it. It is difficult beyond

description to conceive that space can have no end; but it is more difficult to conceive an end. It is difficult beyond the power of man to conceive an eternal duration of what we call time, but it is more impossible to conceive a time when there shall be no time. In like manner of reasoning, everything we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself that he did not make himself, neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself, and it is the conviction arising from this evidence that carries us on, as it were, by necessity, to the belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist, and this first cause man calls God.

It is only by the exercise of reason that man can discover God. Take away that reason, and he would be incapable of understanding anything, and, in this case, it would be just as consistent to read even the book called the Bible to a horse as to a man. How then is it that those people pretend to reject reason?

Almost the only parts in the book called the Bible, that convey to us any idea of God, are some chapters in Job, and the 19th Psalm. I recollect no other. Those parts are true *deistical* composition; for they treat of the *Deity* through his works. They take the book of Creation as the word of God, they refer to no other book, and all the inferences they make are drawn from that volume.

I insert, in this place, the 19th Psalm, as paraphrased into English verse by Addison. I recollect not the prose, and where I write this I have not the opportunity of seeing it

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

'Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth
Repeats the story of her birth;

Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What, though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball;
What, though no real voice or sound,
Amidst their radiant orbs be found;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing as they shine,
'THE HAND THAT MADE US IS DIVINE.'"

What more does man want to know than that the hand, or power, that made these things divine is omnipotent? Let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.

The allusions in Job have all of them the same tendency with this Psalm: that of producing or proving a truth, that would be otherwise unknown, from truths already known.

I recollect not enough of the passages in Job to insert them correctly; but there is one occurs to me that is applicable to the subject I am speaking upon. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"

I know not how the printers have pointed this passage, for I keep no Bible, but it contains two distinct questions, that admit of distinct answers.

First—Canst thou by searching find out God? Yes; because in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence, and by *searching* into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is, that I know by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God.

Secondly—"Canst thou find out the Almighty to *perfection?*" No. Not only because the power and wisdom he has manifested in the structure of the creation that I behold is to me incomprehensible, but because even this manifestation, great as it is, is probably but a small display of that

immensity of power and wisdom by which millions of other worlds, to me invisible by their distance, were created and continue to exist.

It is evident that both these questions were put to the reason of the person to whom they were supposed to have been addressed; and it is only by admitting the first question to be answered affirmatively that the second could follow. It would have been unnecessary and even absurd to have put a second question more difficult than the first, if the first question had been answered negatively. The two questions have different objects: the first refers to the existence of God, the second to his attributes. Reason can discover the one, but it falls infinitely short in discovering the whole of the other.

I recollect not a single passage in all the writings ascribed to the men called apostles that convey any idea of what God is. Those writings are chiefly controversial; and the gloominess of the subject they dwell upon—that of a man dying in agony on a cross—is better suited to the gloomy genius of a monk in a cell, by whom it is not impossible they were written, than to any man breathing the open air of the creation. The only passage that occurs to me that has any reference to the works of God, by which only his power and wisdom can be known, is related to have been spoken by Jesus Christ as a remedy against distrustful care: "Behold the lillies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin." This, however, is far inferior to the allusions in Job, and in the nineteenth Psalm; but it is similar in idea, and the modesty of the imagery is correspondent to the modesty of the man.

As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of Atheism—a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of manism with but little Deism, and is as near Atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body which it calls a redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun, and it produces by this means a religious or an irreligious eclipse of light. It has put the whole orbit of reason into shade.

The effect of this obscurity has been that of turning everything upside down, and representing it in reverse: and

among the revolutions it has thus magically produced, it has made a revolution in theology.

That which is now called natural philosophy, embracing the whole circle of science, of which astronomy occupies the chief place, is the study of the works of God, and of the power and wisdom of God in his works, and is the true theology.

As to the theology that is now studied in its place, it is the study of human opinions and of human fancies "concerning" God. It is not the study of God himself in the works that he has made, but in the works of writings that man has made; and it is not among the least of the mischiefs that the Christian system has done to the world that it has abandoned the original and beautiful system of theology, like a beautiful innocent to distress and reproach, to make room for the hag of superstition.

The Book of Job and the 19th Psalm, which even the Church admits to be more ancient than the chronological order in which they stand in the book called the Bible, are theological orations conformable to the original system of theology. The internal evidence of those orations proves to a demonstration that a study and contemplation of the works of creation, and of the power and wisdom of God revealed and manifested in those works, made a great part of the religious devotion of the times in which they were written; and it was this devotional study and contemplation that led to the discovery of the principles upon which what are now called sciences are established; and it is to the discovery of these principle that almost all the arts that contribute to the convenience of human life owe their existence. Every principal art has some science for its parent, though the person who mechanically performs the work does not always, and but very seldom, perceives the connection.

It is a fraud of the Christian system to call the sciences "human inventions;" it is only the application of them that is human. Every science has for its basis a system of principles as fixed and unalterable as those by which the universe is regulated and governed. Man cannot make principles; he can only discover them.

For example, every person who looks at an almanack sees an account when an eclipse will take place, and he sees also

that it never fails to take place according to the account there given. This shows that man is acquainted with the laws by which the heavenly bodies move. But it would be something worse than ignorance were any church on earth to say that those laws are a human invention.

It would also be ignorance, or something worse, to say that the scientific principles, by the aid of which man is enabled to calculate and foreknow when an eclipse will take place, are a human invention. Man cannot invent anything that is eternal and immutable; and the scientific principles he employs for this purpose must be, and are, of necessity, as eternal and immutable as the laws by which the heavenly bodies move, or they could not be used as they are to ascertain the time when and the manner how an eclipse will take place.

The scientific principles that man employs to obtain the fore-knowledge of an eclipse, or of anything else relating to the motion of the heavenly bodies, are contained chiefly in that part of science that is called trigonometry, or the properties of a triangle, which, when applied to the study of the heavenly bodies, is called astronomy; when applied to direct the course of a ship on the ocean, it is called navigation; when applied to the construction of figures drawn by rule and compass, it is called geometry; when applied to the construction of plans of edifices, it is called architecture; when applied to the measurement of any portion of the surface of the earth, it is called land-surveying. In fine, it is the soul of science. It is an eternal truth. It contains the "mathematical demonstration" of which man speaks, and the extent of its uses is unknown.

It may be said that man can make or draw a triangle, and therefore a triangle is a human invention.

But the triangle, when drawn, is no other than the image of the principle: it is a delineation to the eye, and from thence to the mind, of a principle that would otherwise be imperceptible. The triangle does not make the principle, any more than a candle taken into a room that was dark makes the chairs and tables that before were invisible. All the properties of a triangle exist independently of the figure, and existed before any triangle was drawn or thought of by man. Man had no more to do in the formation of those properties or principles than he had to do in making the

laws by which the heavenly bodies move; and, therefore, the one must have the same divine origin as the other.

In the same manner as it may be said that man can make a triangle, so also it may be said he can make the mechanical instrument called a lever. But the principle by which the lever acts is a thing distinct from the instrument, and would exist if the instrument did not; it attaches itself to the instrument after it is made; the instrument therefore can act no otherwise than it does act; neither can all the efforts of human invention make it act otherwise. That which, in all such cases, man calls the "effect," is no other than the principle itself rendered perceptible to the senses.

Since then, man cannot make principles, from whence did he gain a knowledge of them, so as to be able to apply them, not only to things on earth, but to ascertain the motion of bodies so immensely distant from him as all the heavenly bodies are? From whence, I ask, "could" he gain that knowledge, but from the study of the true theology?

It is the structure of the universe that has taught this knowledge to man. That structure is an ever-existing exhibition of every principle upon which every part of mathematical science is founded. The offspring of this science is mechanics; for mechanics is no other than the principles of science applied practically. The man who proportions the several parts of a mill uses the same scientific principles as if he had the power of constructing an universe; but, as he cannot give to matter that invisible agency by which all the component parts of the immense machine of the universe have influence upon each other, and act in motional unison together without any apparent contact, and to which man has given the name of attraction, gravitation, and repulsion, he supplies the place of that agency by the humble imitation of teeth and cogs. All the parts of man's microcosm must visibly touch. But could he gain a knowledge of that agency, so as to be able to apply it in practice, we might then say that another "canonical book" of the Word of God had been discovered.

If man could alter the properties of the lever, so also could he alter the properties of the triangle; for a lever (taking that sort of lever which is called a steel-yard, for the sake of explanation) forms, when in motion, a triangle. The line it descends from (one point of that line being in

the fulcrum), the line it descends to, and the cord of the arc which the end of the lever describes in the air, are the three sides of a triangle. The other arm of the lever describes also a triangle; and the corresponding sides of those two triangles, calculated scientifically, or measured geometrically, and also the signs, tangents, and secants generated from the angles, and geometrically measured, have the same proportions to each other as the different weights have that will balance each other on the lever, leaving the weight of the lever out of the case.

It may also be said that man can make a wheel and axis, that he can put wheels of different magnitudes together, and produce a mill. Still the case comes back to the same point, which is, that he did not make the principle which gives the wheel those powers. That principle is as unalterable as in the former cases, or rather it is the same principle under a different appearance to the eye.

The power that two wheels of different magnitudes have upon each other is in the same proportion as if the semi-diameter of the two wheels were joined together, and made into that kind of lever I have described, suspended at the part where the semi-diameters join; for the two wheels, scientifically considered, are no other than the two circles generated by the motion of the compound lever.

It is from the study of the true theology that all our knowledge of science is derived, and it is from that knowledge that all the arts have originated.

The Almighty Lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited man to study and to imitation. It is as if He had said to the inhabitants of this globe that we call ours, "I have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, *and learn from my munificence to all to be kind to each other.*"

Of what use is it, unless it be to teach man something, that his eye is endowed with the power of beholding, to an incomprehensible distance, an immensity of worlds revolving in the ocean of space? Or of what use is it that this immensity of worlds is visible to man? What has man to do with the Pleiades, with Orion, with Sirius, with the star he calls the North star, the moving orbs he has named

Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, if no uses are to follow from their being visible? A less power of vision would have been sufficient for man, if the immensity he now possesses were given only to waste itself, as it were, on an immense desert of space glittering with shows.

It is only by contemplating what he calls the starry heavens, as the book and school of science, that he discovers any use in their being visible to him, or any advantage resulting from his immensity of vision. But when he contemplates the subject in this light, he sees an additional motive for saying that "nothing was made in vain;" for in vain would be this power of vision if it taught man nothing.

As the Christian system of faith has made a revolution in theology, so also has it made a revolution in the state of learning. That which is now called learning was not learning originally. Learning does not consist, as the schools now make it consist, in the knowledge of languages, but in the knowledge of things to which language gives names.

The Greeks were a learned people; but learning with them did not consist in speaking Greek, any more than in a Roman speaking Latin, or a Frenchman speaking French, or an Englishman speaking English. From what we know of the Greeks it does not appear that they knew or studied any language but their own; and this was one cause of their becoming so learned—it afforded them more time to apply themselves to better studies. The schools of the Greeks were schools of science and philosophy, and not of languages; and it is in the knowledge of the things that science and philosophy teach that learning consists.

Almost all the scientific learning that now exists came to us from the Greeks, or the people who spoke the Greek language. It therefore became necessary for the people of other nations who spoke a different language, that some among them should learn the Greek language, in order that the learning the Greeks had might be known in those nations, by translating the Greek books of science and philosophy into the mother tongue of each nation.

The study, therefore, of the Greek language (and in the same manner for the Latin) was no other than the drudgery business of a linguist; and the language thus obtained was no other than the means, as it were, the tools, employed to

obtain the learning the Greeks had. It made no part of the learning itself, and was so distinct from it as to make it exceedingly probable that the persons who had studied Greek sufficiently to translate those works—such, for instance, as "Euclid's Elements"—did not understand any of the learning the works contained.

As there is now nothing new to be learned from the dead languages, all the useful books being already translated, the languages are become useless, and the time expended in teaching and in learning them is wasted. So far as the study of languages may contribute to the progress and communication of knowledge (for it has nothing to do with the *creation* of knowledge) it is only in the living languages that new knowledge is to be found; and certain it is that, in general, a youth will learn more of a living language in one year than of a dead language in seven, and it is but seldom that the teacher knows much of it himself. The difficulty of learning the dead languages does not arise from any superior abstruseness in the languages themselves, but in their "being dead" and the pronunciation entirely lost It would be the same thing with any language when it becomes dead. The best Greek linguist that now exists does not understand Greek so well as a Grecian ploughman or a Grecian milkmaid did; and the same for the Latin, compared with a ploughman or a milkmaid of the Romans; and, with respect to pronunciation, and idiom, not so well as the cows that she milked. It would, therefore, be advantageous to the state of learning to abolish the study of the dead languages, and to make learning consist, as it originally did, in scientific knowledge.

The apology that is sometimes made for continuing to teach the dead languages is that they are taught at a time when a child is not capable of exerting any other mental faculty than that of memory. But this is altogether erroneous. The human mind has a natural disposition to scientific knowledge and to the things connected with it. The first and favorite amusement of a child, even before it begins to play, is that of imitating the works of man. It builds houses with cards or sticks; it navigates the little ocean of a bowl of water with a paper boat; or dams the stream of a gutter, and contrives something which it calls a mill; and it interests itself in the fate of its works with a

care that resembles affection. It afterwards goes to school, where its genius is killed by the barren study of a dead language, and the philosopher is lost in the linguist.

But the apology that is now made for continuing to teach the dead languages could not be the cause at first of cutting down learning to the narrow and humble sphere of linguistry; the cause, therefore, must be sought for elsewhere. In all researches of this kind, the best evidence that can be produced is the internal evidence the thing carries with itself, and the evidence of circumstances that unite with it; both of which in this case are not difficult to be discovered.

Putting, then, aside, as a matter of distinct consideration, the outrage offered to the moral justice of God, by supposing him to make the innocent suffer for the guilty, and also the loose morality and low contrivance of supposing him to change himself into the shape of man, in order to make an excuse to himself for not executing his supposed sentence upon Adam—putting, I say, those things aside, as matter of distinct consideration, it is certain that what is called the Christian system of faith, including in it the whimsical account of the creation; the strange story of Eve, the snake, and the apple; the ambiguous idea of a man-god; the corporeal idea of the death of a god; the mythological idea of a family of gods; and the Christian system of arithmetic, that three are one, and one is three, are all irreconcileable, not only to the divine gift of reason that God has given to man, but to the knowledge that man gains of the power and wisdom of God by the aid of the sciences, and by studying the structure of the universe that God has made.

The setter-up, therefore, and the advocates of the Christian system of faith, could not but forsee that the continually-progressive knowledge that man would gain, by the aid of science, of the power and wisdom of God, manifested in the structure of the universe, and in all the works of creation, would militate against, and call into question, the truth of their system of faith; and, therefore, it became necessary to their purpose to cut learning down to a size less dangerous to their project; and this they effected by restricting the idea of learning to the dead study of dead languages.

They not only rejected the study of science out of the Christian schools, but they persecuted it; and it is only

within about the last two centuries that the study has been revived. So late as 1610, Galileo, a Florentine, discovered and introduced the use of telescopes, and by applying them to observe the motions and appearances of the heavenly bodies, afforded additional means for ascertaining the true structure of the universe. Instead of being esteemed for those discoveries he was sentenced to renounce them, or the opinions resulting from them, as a damnable heresy. And prior to that time Vigilus was condemned to be burned for asserting the antipodes, or, in other words, that the earth was a globe, and habitable in every part where there was land. Yet the truth of this is now too well known even to be told.

If the belief of errors not morally bad did no mischief, it would make no part of the moral duty of man to oppose and remove them. There was no moral ill in believing the earth was flat like a trencher any more than there was any moral virtue in believing it was round like a globe; neither was there any moral ill in believing that the Creator made no other world than this, any more than there was moral virtue in believing that he made millions, and that the infinity of space is filled with worlds. But when a system of religion is made to grow out of a supposed system of creation that is not true, and to unite itself therewith in a manner almost inseparable therefrom, the case assumes an entirely different ground. It is then that the truth, though otherwise indifferent itself, becomes an essential by becoming the criterion, that either confirms by corresponding evidence, or denies by contradictory evidence the reality of religion itself. In this view of the case it is the moral duty of man to obtain every possible evidence that the structure of the heavens, or any other part of creation, affords with respect to systems of religion. But this the supporters or partisans of the Christian system, as if dreading the result, incessantly opposed, and not only rejected the sciences but persecuted the professors. Had Newton or Descartes lived three or four hundred years ago, and pursued their studies as they did, it is most probable they would not have lived to finish them; and had Franklin drawn lightning from the clouds at the same time, it would have been at the hazard of expiring for it in flames.

Latter times have laid all the blame upon the Goths and

Vandals; but however unwilling the partisans of the Christian system may be to believe or to acknowledge it, it is nevertheless true that the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system. There was more knowledge in the world before that period than for many centuries afterwards; and as to religious knowledge, the Christian system, as already said, was only another species of mythology, and the mythology to which it succeeded was a corruption of an ancient system of Theism.*

It is owing to this long interregnum of science, *and to no other cause*, that we have now to look back through a vast chasm of many hundred years to the respectable characters we call the ancients. Had the progression of knowledge gone on proportionably with the stock that before existed, that chasm would have been filled up with characters rising superior in knowledge to each other; and those ancients we now so much admire would have appeared respectably in the background of the scene. But the Christian system laid all waste; and if we take our stand about the beginning of the sixteenth century we look back through that long chasm, to

* It is impossible for us now to know at what time the heathen mythology began; but it is certain, from the internal evidence that it carries, that it did not begin in the same state or condition in which it ended. All the gods of that mythology, except Saturn, were of modern invention. The supposed reign of Saturn was prior to that which is called heathen mythology, and was so far a species of atheism, that it admitted the belief of only one God. Saturn is supposed to have abdicated the government in favor of his three sons and one daughter, Jupiter, Pluto, Neptune, and Juno; after this thousands of other gods and demi-gods were imaginarily created, and the calendar of gods increased as fast as the calendar of saints, and the calendars of courts have increased since.

All the corruptions that have taken place in theology, and in religion, have been produced by admitting what man calls revealed religion. The mythologists pretended to more revealed religion than the Christians do. They had their oracles and their priests, who were supposed to receive and deliver the word of God verbally on almost all occasions.

Since then, all corruptions, down from Moloch to modern predestinarianism, and the human sacrifices of the heathens, to the Christian sacrifice of the Creator, have been produced by admitting what is called revealed religion, the most effectual means to prevent all such evils and impositions is, not to admit of any other revelation than that which is manifested in the book of Creation, and to contemplate the Creation as the only true and real word of God that ever did or ever will exist, and that everything else called the word of God is fable and imposition.

the times of the ancients, as over a vast sandy desert, in which not a shrub appears to intercept the vision to the fertile hills beyond.

It is an inconsistency, scarcely possible to be credited, that anything should exist under the name of a religion, that held it to be irreligious to study and contemplate the structure of the universe that God had made. But the fact is too well established to be denied. The event that served more than any other to break the first link in this long chain of despotic ignorance is that known by the name of the Reformation by Luther. From that time—though it does not appear to have made any part of the intention of Luther, or of those who are called reformers—the sciences began to revive, and liberality, their natural associate, began to appear. This was the only public good the Reformation did, for, with respect to religious good, it might as well not have taken place. The mythology still continued the same, and a multiplicity of national popes grew out of the downfall of the pope of Christendom.

Having thus shown, from the internal evidence of things, the cause that produced a change in the state of learning, and the motive for substituting the study of the dead languages in the place of the sciences, I proceed, in addition to the several observations already made in the former part of this work, to compare, or rather to confront, the evidence that the structure of the universe affords with the Christian system of religion. But as I cannot begin this part better than by referring to the ideas that occurred to me at an early part of life, and which, I doubt not, have occurred in some degree to almost every other person at one time or other, I shall state what those ideas were, and add thereto such other matter as shall arise out of the subject, giving to the whole, by way of preface, a short introduction.

My father being of the Quaker profession, it was my good fortune to have an exceedingly good moral education, and a tolerable stock of useful learning. Though I went to the grammar school, I did not learn Latin, not only because I had no inclination to learn languages, but because of the objection the Quakers have against the books in which the language is taught. But this did not prevent me from being acquainted with the subjects of all the Latin books used in the school.

The natural bent of my mind was to science. I had some turn, and I believe some talent, for poetry, but this I rather repressed than encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination As soon as I was able I purchased a pair of globes, and attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson, and became afterwards acquainted with Dr. Bevis, of the society called the Royal Society, then living in the Temple, and an excellent astronomer.

I had no disposition for what is called politics. It presented to my mind no other idea than is contained in the word jockey-ship. When, therefore, I turned my thoughts towards matters of government, I had to form a system for myself that accorded with the moral and philosophical principles in which I had been educated. I saw, or at least I thought I saw, a vast scene opening itself to the world in the affairs of America, and it appeared to me that, unless the Americans changed the plan they were then pursuing with respect to the government of England, and declared themselves independent, they would not only involve themselves in a multiplicity of new difficulties, but shut out the prospect that was then offering itself to mankind through their means. It was from these motives that I published the work known by the name of "Common Sense," which is the first work I ever did publish, and, so far as I can judge of myself, I believe I never should have been known to the world as an author on any subject whatever had it not been for the affairs of America. I wrote "Common Sense" the latter end of the year 1775, and published it the first of January, 1776. Independence was declared the fourth of July following.

Any person who has made observations on the state and progress of the human mind by observing his own cannot but have observed that there are two distinct classes of what are called thoughts: those that we produce in ourselves by reflection and the act of thinking, and those that come into the mind of their own accord. I have always made it a rule to treat those voluntary visitors with civility, taking care to examine, as well as I was able, if they were worth entertaining, and it is from them I have acquired almost all the knowledge I have. As to the learning that any person gains from school education, it serves only, like a small capital, to put him in the way of beginning learning for

himself afterwards. Every person of learning is finally his own teacher, the reason of which is that principles, being of a distinct quality to circumstances, cannot be impressed upon the memory. Their place of mental residence is the understanding, and they are never so lasting as when they begin by conception. Thus much for the introductory part.

From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea, and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system, or thought it to be a strange affair; I scarcely knew which it was. But I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the church, upon the subject of what is called "Redemption by the death of the Son of God." After the sermon was ended I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man that killed his son when he could not revenge himself in any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. This was not one of those kind of thoughts that had anything in it of childish levity; it was to me a serious reflection arising from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action, and also too mighty to be under the necessity of doing it. I believe in the same manner to this moment; and I moreover believe that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system.

It seems as if parents of the Christian profession were ashamed to tell their children anything about the principles of their religion. They sometimes instruct them in morals, and talk to them of the goodness of what they call Providence; for the Christian mythology has five deities: there is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, God the Providence, and the Goddess Nature. But the Christian story of God the Father putting His son to death, or employing people to do it (for that is the plain language of the story), cannot be told by a parent to a child: and to tell him that it was done to make mankind happier and better is making the story still worse, as if mankind could

be improved by the example of murder; and to tell him that all this is a mystery is only making an excuse for the incredibility of it.

How different is this from the pure and simple profession of Deism! The true Deist has but one Deity, and his religion consists in contemplating the power, wisdom, and benignity of the Deity in his works, and in endeavoring to imitate him in everything moral, scientifical, and mechanical.

The religion that approaches the nearest of all others to true Deism, in the moral and benign part thereof, is that professed by the Quakers: but they have contracted themselves too much by leaving the works of God out of their system. Though I reverence their philanthropy, I cannot help smiling at the conceit, that if the taste of a Quaker could have been consulted at the Creation, what a silent and drab-colored Creation it would have been! Not a flower would have blossomed its gaities, nor a bird been permitted to sing.

Quitting these reflections, I proceed to other matters After I had made myself master of the use of the globes, and of the orrery,* and conceived an idea of an affinity of space, and of the eternal divisibility of matter, and obtained at least a general knowledge of what is called natural philosophy, I began to compare—or, as I have before said, to confront—the eternal evidence those things afford with the Christian system of faith.

Though it is not a direct article of the Christian system that this world that we inhabit is the whole of the habitable creation, yet it is so worked up therewith from what is called the Mosaic account of the Creation, the story of Eve and the apple, and the counterpart of that story, the death of the Son of God, that to believe otherwise—that is, to believe that God created a plurality of worlds, at least as

* As this book may fall into the hands of persons who do not know what an orrery is, it is for their information I add this note, as the name gives no idea of the uses of the thing. The orrery has its name from the person who invented it. It is a machinery of clock-work, representing the universe in miniature, and in which the revolution of the earth round itself and round the sun, the revolution of the moon round the earth, the revolution of the planets round the sun, their relative distances from the sun as the centre of the whole system, their relative distances from each other, and their different magnitudes, are represented as they really exist in what we call the heavens.

numerous as what we call stars—renders the Christian system of faith at once little and ridiculous and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air. The two beliefs cannot be held together in the same mind, and he who thinks that he believes both has thought but little of either.

Though the belief of a plurality of worlds was familiar to the ancients, it is only within the last three centuries that the extent and dimensions of this globe that we inhabit have been ascertained. Several vessels, following the track of the ocean, have sailed entirely round the world, as a man may march in a circle, and come round by the contrary side of the circle to the spot he set out from. The circular dimensions of our world in the widest part, as a man would measure the widest round of an apple or a ball, is only twenty-five thousand and twenty English miles, reckoning sixty-nine miles and a-half to an equatorial degree, and may be sailed round in the space of about three years.*

A world of this extent may at first thought appear to us to be great; but if we compare it with the immensity of space in which it is suspended, like a bubble or a balloon in the air, it is infinitely less in proportion than the smallest grain of sand is to the size of the world, or the finest particle of dew to the whole ocean; and is therefore but small; and, as will be hereafter shown, is only *one* of a system of worlds, of which the universal creation is composed.

It is not difficult to gain some faint idea of the immensity of space in which this and all the other worlds are suspended, if we follow a progression of ideas. When we think of the size or dimensions of a room, our ideas limit themselves to the walls, and there they stop. But when our eye or our imagination darts into space—that is, when it looks upward into what we call the open air, we cannot conceive any walls or boundaries it can have; and if, for the sake of resting our ideas, we suppose a boundary, the question immediately renews itself, and asks, What is beyond that boundary? and in the same manner, What is beyond the next boundary? and so on, till the fatigued imagination returns and says, there is no end. Certainly, then, the

* Allowing a ship to sail, on an average, three miles in an hour, she would sail entirely round the world in less than one year, if she could sail in a direct circle; but she is obliged to follow the course of the ocean.

Creator was not cramped for room when he made this world no larger than it is; and we have to seek the reason in something else. If we take a survey of our own world, or rather of this of which the Creator has given us the use as our portion in the immense system of creation, we find every part of it—the earth, the waters, and the air that surrounds it—filled, and as it were crowded, with life, down from the largest animals we know of to the smallest insects the naked eye can behold, and from thence to others still smaller, and totally invisible without the assistance of the microscope. Every tree, every plant, every leaf, serves not only as an habitation, but as a world to some numerous race, till animal existence becomes so exceedingly refined that the effluvia of a blade of grass would be food for thousands.

Since, then, no part of our earth is left unoccupied, why is it to be supposed that the immensity of space is a naked void lying in eternal waste? There is room for millions of worlds as large or larger than ours, and each of them millions of miles apart from each other.

Having now arrived at this point, if we carry our ideas only one thought further we shall see, perhaps, the true reason—at least a very good reason—for our happiness, why the Creator, instead of making one immense world, extending over an immense quantity of space, has preferred dividing that quantity of matter into several distinct and separate worlds, which we call planets, of which our earth is one. But before I explain my ideas upon this subject, it is necessary (not for the sake of those that already know, but for those who do not) to show what system of the universe is.

That part of the universe that is called the solar system (meaning the system of worlds to which our earth belongs, and of which Sol, or in the English language the sun, is the centre) consists, besides the sun, of six distinct orbs, or planets, or worlds, besides the secondary bodies, called the satellites or moons, of which our earth has one that attends her in her annual revolution round the sun, in like manner as the other satellites or moons attend the planets or worlds to which they severally belong, as may be seen by the assistance of the telescope.

The sun is the centre round which those six worlds or planets revolve at different distances therefrom, and in circles concentric to each other. Each world keeps con-

stantly in nearly the same track round the sun, and continues at the same time, turning round itself, in nearly an upright position, as a top turns round itself when it is spinning on the ground, and leans a little sideways.

It is this leaning of the earth (twenty-three and a-half degrees) that occasions summer and winter, and the different lengths of days and nights. If the earth turned round itself in a position perpendicular to the plane or level of the circle it moves in around the sun, as a top turns round when it stands erect on the ground, the days and nights would be always of the same length—twelve hours day, and twelve hours night—and the seasons would be uniformly the same throughout the year.

Every time that a planet (our earth for example) turns round itself, it makes what we call day and night; and every time it goes entirely round the sun, it makes what we call a year; consequently our world turns three hundred and sixty five times round itself in going once round the sun.*

The names that the ancients gave to those six worlds, and which are still called by the same names, are Mercury, Venus, this world that we call ours, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. They appear larger to the eye than the stars, being many million miles nearer to our earth than any of the stars are. The planet Venus is that which is called the evening star, and sometimes the morning star, as she happens to set after or rise before the sun, which in either case is never more than three hours.

The sun as before said, being the centre, the planet or world nearest the sun is Mercury; his distance from the sun is thirty-four million miles, and he moves round a circle always at that distance from the sun, as a top may be supposed to spin round in the track in which a horse goes in a mill. The second world is Venus; she is fifty-seven million miles distant from the sun, and consequently moves round in a circle much greater than that of Mercury. The third world is this that we inhabit, and which is eighty-eight million miles distant from the sun, and consequently moves

* Those who supposed the sun went round the earth every twenty-four hours made the mistake in idea, that a cook would do in fact, that should make the fire go round the meat, instead of the meat turning round itself towards the fire.

round a circle greater than that of Venus. The fourth world is Mars: he is distant from the sun one hundred and thirty-four million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of our earth. The fifth is Jupiter: he is distant from the sun five hundred and fifty-seven million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Mars. The sixth world is Saturn: he is distant from the sun seven hundred and sixty-three million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle that surrounds the circles or orbits of all the other worlds or planets.

The space, therefore, in the air, or in the immensity of space that our solar system takes up for the several worlds to perform their revolutions in round the sun, is of the extent in a straight line of the whole diameter of the orbit or circle in which Saturn moves round the sun, which, being double his distance from the sun, is fifteen hundred and twenty-six million miles; and its circular extent is nearly five thousand millions, and its globical content is almost three thousand five hundred million times three thousand five hundred million square miles.*

But this, immense as it is, is only one system of worlds. Beyond this, at a vast distance into space, far beyond all power of calculation, are the stars called the fixed stars. They are called fixed because they have no revolutionary motion, as the six worlds or planets have that I have been describing. Those fixed stars continue always at the same

* If it should be asked, how can man know these things? I have one plain answer to give, which is, that man knows how to calculate an eclipse, and also how to calculate to a minute of time when the planet Venus, in making her revolutions round the sun, will come in a straight line between our earth and the sun, and will appear to us about the size of a large pea crossing across the face of the sun. This happens but twice in about a hundred years, at the distance of about eight years from each other, and has happened twice in our time, both of which were foreknown by calculation. It can also be known when they will happen again for a thousand years to come, or to any other portion of time. As, therefore, man could not be able to do those things if he did not understand the solar system, and the manner in which the revolutions of the several planets or worlds are performed, the fact of calculating an eclipse or a transit of Venus, is a proof, in point that the knowledge exists, and as to a few thousands, or even a few million miles, more or less, it makes scarcely any sensible difference in such immense distances.

distance from each other, and always in the same place, as the sun does in the centre of our system. The probability therefore is, that each of those fixed stars is also a sun, round which another system of worlds or planets, though too remote for us to discover, performs its revolutions, as our system of worlds does round our central sun.

By this easy progression of ideas, the immensity of space will appear to us to be filled with systems of worlds, and that no part of space lies at waste, any more than any part of the globe of earth and water is left unoccupied.

Having thus endeavored to convey in a familiar and easy manner some idea of the structure of the universe, I return to explain what I before alluded to, namely, the great benefits arising to man in consequence of the Creator having made a *plurality* of worlds, such as our system is, consisting of a central sun and six worlds besides satellites, in preference to that of creating one world only of a vast extent.

It is an idea I have never lost sight of that all our knowledge of science is derived from the revolutions exhibited to our eye (and from thence to our understanding) which those several planets or worlds, of which our system is composed, make in their circuit round the sun.

Had, then, the quantity of matter which these six worlds contain been blended into one solitary globe, the consequence to us would have been that either no revolutionary motion would have existed or not a sufficiency of it to give us the idea and the knowledge of science we now have; and it is from the sciences that all the mechanical arts that contribute so much to our earthly felicity and comfort are derived.

As, therefore, the Creator made nothing in vain, so also must it be believed that he organised the structure of the universe in the most advantageous manner for the benefit of man; and as we see, and from experience feel, the benefits we derive from the structure of the universe, formed as it is, which benefits we should not have had the opportunity of enjoying if the structure, so far as it relates to our system, had been a solitary globe, we can discover at least one reason why a *plurality* of worlds has been made, and that reason calls forth the devotional gratitude of man as well as his admiration.

But it is not to us, the inhabitants of this globe only, that the benefits arising from a plurality of worlds are limited. The inhabitants of each of the worlds of which our system is composed enjoy the same opportunities of knowledge as we do. They behold the revolutionary motions of our earth as we behold theirs. All the planets revolve in sight of each other, and therefore the same universal school of science presents itself to all.

Neither does the knowledge stop here. The system of worlds next to us exhibits, in its revolutions, the same principles and schools of science to the inhabitants of their system as our system does to us, and in like manner throughout the immensity of space.

Our ideas, not only of the almightiness of the Creator, but of his wisdom and his beneficence, become enlarged in proportion as we contemplate the extent and the structure of the universe. The solitary idea of a solitary world rolling, or at rest, in the immense ocean of space, gives place to the cheerful idea of a society of worlds, so happily contrived as to administer, even by their motion, instruction to man. We see our own earth filled with abundance, but we forget to consider how much of that abundance is owing to the scientific knowledge the vast machinery of the universe has unfolded.

But, in the midst of those reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith, that forms itself upon the idea of only one world, and that of no greater extent, as is before shown, than twenty-five thousand miles, an extent which a man walking at the rate of three miles an hour for twelve hours in the day, could he keep in a circular direction, would walk entirely round in less than two years. Alas! what is this to the mighty ocean of space and the almighty power of the Creator?

From whence then could arise the solitary and strange conceit that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on his protection, should quit the care of all the rest, and come to die in our world, because, they say, one man and one woman had eaten an apple. And, on the other hand, are we to suppose that every world in the boundless creation had an Eve, an apple, a serpent, and a Redeemer? In this case, the person who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would

have nothing else to do than to travel from world to world in an endless succession of deaths, with scarcely a momentary interval of life.

It has been by rejecting the evidence that the word or works of God in the creation affords to our senses, and the action of our reason upon that evidence, that so many wild and whimsical systems of faith and of religion have been fabricated and set up. There may be many systems of religion that, so far from being morally bad, are in many respects morally good; but there can be but ONE that is true; and that one necessarily must, as it ever will, be in all things consistent with the ever existing word of God that we behold in his works. But such is the strange construction of the Christian system of faith, that every evidence the heavens afford to man either directly contradicts it or renders it absurd.

It is possible to believe, and I always feel pleasure in encouraging myself to believe it, that there have been men in the world who persuaded themselves that what is called a *pious fraud* might, at least under particular circumstances, be productive of some good. But, the fraud being once established, could not afterwards be explained; for it is with a pious fraud as with a bad action, it begets a calamitous necessity of going on.

The persons who first preached the Christian system of faith, and in some measure combined with it the morality preached by Jesus Christ, might persuade themselves that it was better than the heathen mythology that then prevailed. From the first preachers the fraud went to the second, and to the third, till the idea of its being a pious fraud became lost in the belief of its being true; and that belief became again encouraged by the interest of those who made a livelihood by preaching it.

But, though such a belief might by such means be rendered almost general among the laity, it is next to impossible to account for the continual persecution carried on by the church for several hundred years against the sciences and against the professors of science, if the church had not some record or some tradition that it was originally no other than a pious fraud, or did not foresee that it could not be maintained against the evidence that the structure of the universe afforded.

Having thus shown the irreconcileable inconsistencies between the real Word of God existing in the universe and that which is called the Word of God, as shown to us in a printed book that any man might make, I proceed to speak of the three principal means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impose upon mankind.

Those three means are—Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy. The two first are incompatible with true religion, and the third ought always to be suspected.

With respect to mystery, everything we behold is, in one sense, a mystery to us. Our own existence is a mystery. The whole vegetable world is a mystery. We cannot account how it is that an acorn, when put into the ground, is made to develop itself and become an oak. We know not how it is that the seed we sow unfolds and multiplies itself, and returns to us such an abundant interest for so small a capital.

The fact, however, as distinct from the operating cause, is not a mystery, because we see it; and we know also the means we are to use, which is no other than putting the seed into the ground. We know, therefore, as much as is necessary for us to know; and that part of the operation that we do not know, and which if we did we could not perform, the Creator takes upon himself, and performs it for us. We are, therefore, better off than if we had been let into the secret, and left to do it for ourselves.

But though every created thing is in this sense a mystery, the word mystery cannot be applied to *moral truth* any more than obscurity can be applied to light. The God in whom we believe is a God of moral truth, and not a God of mystery or obscurity. Mystery is the antagonist of truth. It is a fog of human invention that obscures truth, and represents it in distortion. Truth never envelopes *itself* in mystery; and the mystery in which it is at any time enveloped is the work of its antagonist, and never of itself.

Religion, therefore, being a belief of the God, and the practice of moral truth, cannot have connexion with mystery. The belief of a God, so far from having anything of mystery in it, is of all beliefs the most easy; because it arises to us, as is before observed, out of necessity. And the practice of moral truth, or, in other words, a practical

imitation of the moral goodness of God, is no other than our acting towards each other as he acts benignly towards all. We cannot *serve* God in the manner we serve those who cannot do without such service; and, therefore, the only idea we can have of serving God, is that of contributing to the happiness of the living creation that God has made. This cannot be done by retiring ourselves from the society of the world, and spending a recluse life in selfish devotion.

The very nature and design of religion, if I may so express it, prove even to demonstration that it must be free from everything of mystery, and unencumbered with everything that is mysterious. Religion, considered as a duty, is incumbent upon every living soul alike, and therefore must be on a level to the understanding and comprehension of all. Man does not learn religion as he learns the secrets and mysteries of a trade. He learns the theory of religion by reflection. It arises out of the action of his own mind upon the things which he sees or upon what he may happen to hear or to read, and the practice joins itself thereto.

When men whether from policy or pious fraud, set up systems of religion incompatible with the word or works of God in the creation, and not only above but repugnant to human comprehension, they were under the necessity of inventing, or adopting, a word that should serve as a bar to all questions, inquiries, and speculations. The word mystery answered this purpose; and thus it has happened that religion, which in itself is without mystery, has been corrupted into a fog of mysteries.

As *mystery* answered all general purposes, *miracle* followed as an occasional auxiliary. The former served to bewilder the mind, the latter to puzzle the senses. The one was the lingo, the other the legerdemain.

But before going further into this subject, it will be proper to inquire what is to be understood by a miracle.

In the same sense that everything may be said to be a mystery, so also may it be said that everything is a miracle, and that no one thing is a greater miracle than another. The elephant, though larger, is not a greater miracle than a mite; nor a mountain a greater miracle than an atom. To an Almighty power it is no more difficult to make the one than the other, and no more difficult to make a million of

worlds than one. Everything, therefore, is a miracle in one sense; whilst, in the other sense, there is no such thing as a miracle. It is a miracle when compared to our power and to our comprehension. It is not a miracle compared to the power that performs it. But, as nothing in this description conveys the idea that is affixed to the word miracle, it is necessary to carry the inquiry further.

Mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws by which what they call nature is supposed to act, and that a miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws. But unless we know the whole extent of those laws, and of what are commonly called the powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether anything that may appear to us wonderful, or miraculous, be within, or beyond, or be contrary to, her natural power of acting.

The ascension of a man several miles high into the air would have everything in it that constitutes the idea of a miracle, if it were not known that a species of air can be generated several times lighter than the common atmospheric air, and yet possess elasticity enough to prevent the balloon, in which that light air is enclosed, from being compressed into as many times less bulk, by the common air that surrounds it. In like manner, extracting flames or sparks of fire from the human body as visible as from a steel struck with a flint, and causing iron or steel to move without any visible agent, would also give the idea of a miracle, if we were not acquainted with electricity, and magnetism; so also would many other experiments in natural philosophy to those who are not acquainted with the subject. The restoring persons to life who are to appearance dead, as is practised upon drowned persons, would also be a miracle if it ere not known that animation is capable of being suspended ithout being extinct.

Besides these, there are performances by sleight of hand, nd by persons acting in concert, that have a miraculous appearance, which, when known, are thought nothing of. And, besides these, there are mechanical and optical deceptions. There is now an exhibition in Paris of ghosts and spectres, which, though it is not imposed upon the spectators as a fact, has an astonishing appearance. As, therefore, we know not the extent to which either nature or art can go, there is no positive criterion to determine what a miracle is;

and mankind in giving credit to appearances, under the idea of their being miracles, are subject to be continually imposed upon.

Since then, appearances are so capable of deceiving, and things not real have a strong resemblance to things that are, nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose that the Almighty would make use of means such as are called miracles, that would subject the person who performed them to the suspicion of being an impostor, and the person who related them to be suspected of lying, and the doctrine intended to be supported thereby to be suspected as a fabulous invention.

Of all the modes of evidence that ever were invented to obtain belief to any system or opinion to which the name of religion has been given, that of miracle, however successful the imposition may have been, is the most inconsistent. For, in the first place, whenever recourse is had to show, for the purpose of procuring that belief, (for a miracle, under any idea of the word, is a show) it implies a lameness or weakness in the doctrine that is preached. And, in the second place, it is degrading the Almighty into the character of a showman playing tricks to amuse and make the people stare and wonder. It is also the most equivocal sort of evidence that can be set up; for the belief is not to depend upon the thing called a miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter, who says that he saw it; and, therefore, the thing, were it true, would have no better chance of being believed than if it were a lie.

Suppose I were to say that when I sat down to write this book, a hand presented itself in the air, took up the pen, and wrote every word that is herein written, would anybody believe me? Certainly they would not. Would they believe me a whit the more if the thing had been a fact? Certainly they would not. Since then, a real miracle, were it to happen, would be subject to the same fate as the falsehood, the inconsistency becomes the greater of supposing the Almighty would make use of means that would not answer the purpose for which they were intended, even if they were real.

If we are to suppose a miracle to be something so entirely out of the course of what is called Nature that she must go out of that course to accomplish it, and we see an account

given of such miracle by the person who said he saw it, it raises a question in the mind very easily decided, which is—Is it more probable that Nature should go out of her course, or that a man should tell a lie? We have never seen, in our time, Nature go out of her course, but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time; it is, therefore, at least millions to one that the reporter of a miracle tells a lie.

The story of the whale swallowing Jonah, though a whale is large enough to do it, borders greatly on the marvellous; but it would have approached nearer to the idea of a miracle if Jonah had swallowed the whale. In this, which may serve for all cases of miracles, the matter would decide itself as before stated, namely:—Is it more probable that a man should have swallowed a whale, or told a lie?

But supposing that Jonah had really swallowed the whale, and gone with it in his belly to Nineveh, and to convince the people that it was true, have cast it up in their sight of the full length and size of a whale, would they not have believed him to have been the devil instead of a prophet? Or, if the whale had carried Jonah to Nineveh, and cast him up in the same public manner, would they not have believed the whale to have been the devil, and Jonah one of his imps?

The most extraordinary of all the things called miracles related in the New Testament is that of the devil flying away with Jesus Christ, and carrying him to the top of a high mountain, and to the top of the highest pinnacle of the Temple, and showing him, and promising him "all the kingdoms of the world." How happened it that he did not discover America? or is it only with *kingdoms* that his sooty highness has any interest?

I have too much respect for the moral character of Christ to believe that he told this whale of a miracle himself; neither is it easy to account for what purpose it could have been fabricated, unless it were to impose upon the connoisseurs of miracles, as it is sometimes practised upon the connoisseurs of Queen Anne's farthings, and collectors of relics and antiquities, or to render the belief of miracles ridiculous by outdoing miracle as Don Quixote outdid chivalry, or to embarrass the belief of miracles by making it doubtful by what power, whether of God or of the devil,

anything called a miracle was performed. It requires, however, a great deal of faith in the devil to believe this miracle.

In every point of view in which those things called miracles can be placed and considered, the reality of them is improbable and their existence unnecessary. They would not, as before observed, answer any useful purpose even if they were true, for it is more difficult to obtain belief to a miracle than to a principle evidently moral without any miracle. Moral principle speaks universally for itself. Miracle could be but a thing of the moment, and seen but by a few; after this it requires a transfer of faith from God to man to believe a miracle upon man's report. Instead, therefore, of admitting the recitals of miracles as evidence of any system of religion being true, they ought to be considered as symptoms of its being fabulous. It is necessary to the full and upright character of truth that it rejects the crutch, and it is consistent with the character of fable to seek the aid that truth rejects. Thus much for mystery and miracle.

As mystery and miracles took charge of the past and the present, prophesy took charge of the future, and rounded the tenses of faith. It was not sufficient to know what had been done, but what would be done. The supposed prophet was the supposed historian of times to come! And if he happened, in shooting with a long bow of a thousand years, to strike within a thousand miles of a mark, the ingenuity of posterity could make it a point-blank; and, if he happened to be directly wrong, it was only to suppose, as in the case of Jonah and Nineveh, that God had repented himself, and changed his mind. What a fool do fabulous systems make a man!

It has been shown in a former part of this work that the original meaning of the words prophet and prophesying has been changed, and that a prophet, in the sense of the word as now used, is a creature of modern invention; and it is owing to this change in the meaning of the words that the flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets, and phrases and expressions now rendered obscure by our not being acquainted with the local circumstances to which they applied at the time they were used, have been erected into prophesies, and made to bend to explanations at the will and whimsical

conceits of sectaries, expounders, and commentators. Everything unintelligible was prophetical, and everything insignificant was typical. A blunder would have served for a prophesy, and a dishclout for a type.

If by a prophet we are to suppose a man to whom the Almighty communicated some event that would take place in future, either there were such men or there were not. If there were it is consistent to believe that the event so communicated would be told in terms that could be understood, and not related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard it, and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen afterwards. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty to suppose he would deal in this jesting manner with mankind, yet all the things called prophesies in the book called the Bible come under this description.

But it is with prophesy as it is with miracle. It could not answer the purpose even if it were real. Those to whom a prophesy should be told could not tell whether the man prophesied or lied, or whether it had been revealed to him or whether he conceived it; and if the thing that he prophesied, or pretended to prophesy, should happen, or something like it among the multitude of things that are daily happening, nobody could again know whether he foreknew or guessed at it, or whether it was accidental. A prophet, therefore, is a character useless and unnecessary, and the safe side of the case is to guard against being imposed upon by not giving credit to such relations.

Upon the whole, mystery, miracle, and prophesy are appendages that belong to fabulous and not to true religion. They are the means by which so many *lo heres!* and *lo theres!* have been spread about the world, and religion has been made into a trade. The success of one impostor gave encouragement to another and the quieting salvo of doing *some good* by keeping up a *pious fraud* protected them from remorse.

Having now extended the subject to a greater length than I first intended, I shall bring it to a close by abstracting a summary from the whole.

Firstly, that the idea or belief of a word of God existing in print, or in writing, or in speech, is inconsistent in itself for the reasons already assigned. These reasons, among

many others, are the want of an universal language; the mutability of language; the errors to which translation are subject; the possibility of totally suppressing such a word; the probability of altering it, or of fabricating the whole, and imposing it upon the world.

Secondly, that the Creation we behold is the real and ever-existing word of God, in which we cannot be deceived. It proclaims his power, it demonstrates his wisdom, it manifests his goodness and beneficence.

Thirdly, that the moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God, manifested in the creation towards all his creatures. That seeing as we daily do, the goodness of God to all men, it is an example calling upon all men to practise the same towards each other, and consequently, that everything of persecution and revenge between man and man, and everything of cruelty to animals, is a violation of moral duty.

I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the Power that gave me existence is able to continue it, in any form and manner he pleases, either with or without this body; and it appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began.

It is certain that, in one point, all nations of the earth, and all religions agree. All believe in a God. The things in which they disagree are the redundancies annexed to that belief; and therefore, if ever an universal religion should prevail, it will not be believing anything new, but in getting rid of redundancies, and believing as man believed at first. Adam, if ever there was such a man, was created a Deist; but in the meantime let every man follow as he has a right to do, the religion and the worship he prefers.

PART II.

PREFACE.

I HAVE mentioned in the former part of the "Age of Reason," that it had long been my intention to publish my thoughts upon religion, but that I had originally reserved it to a later period in life, intending it to be the last work I should undertake. The circumstances, however, which existed in France in the latter end of the year 1793, determined me to delay it no longer. The just and humane principles of the revolution, which philosophy had first diffused, had been departed from. The idea, always dangerous to society, as it is derogatory to the Almighty—that priests could forgive sins—though it seemed to exist no longer, had blunted the feelings of humanity, and callously prepared men for the commission of all manner of crimes. The intolerant spirit of church persecutions had transferred itself into politics; the tribunals styled revolutionary supplied the place of an inquisition; and the guillotine of the State outdid the fire and faggot of the church. I saw many of my most intimate friends destroyed; others daily carried to prison; and I had reason to believe and had also intimations given me, that the same danger was approaching myself.

Under these disadvantages, I began the former part of the "Age of Reason;" I had, besides, neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both, nor could I procure any: notwithstanding which I have produced a work that no Bible believer, though writing at his ease, with a library of church books about him, can refute. Towards the latter end of December of that year, a motion was made and carried, to exclude foreigners from the Convention. There were but two in it—Anacharsis Clootz and myself: and I saw I was particularly pointed at by Bourdon de l'Oise, in his speech on that motion.

Conceiving, after this, that I had but a few days of liberty, I sat down, and brought the work to a close as speedily as possible; and I had not finished it more than six hours, in the state it has since appeared, before a guard came there, about three in the morning, with an order, signed by the two Committees of Public Safety and Surety-General, for putting me in arrestation as a foreigner, and conveyed me to the prison of the Luxembourg. I contrived, in my way there, to call on Joel Barlow, and I put the manuscript of the work into his hands, as more safe than in my possession in prison; and not knowing what might be the fate in France either of the writer or the work, I addressed it to the protection of the citizens of the United States.

It is with justice that I say, that the guard who executed this order, and the interpreter of the Committee of General Surety who accompanied them to examine my papers, treated me not only with civility, but with respect. The keeper of the Luxembourg, Bennoit, a man of a good heart, showed to me every friendship in his power, as did also all his family, while he continued in that station. He was removed from it, put into arrestation, and carried before the tribunal upon a malignant accusation, but acquitted.

After I had been in the Luxembourg about three weeks, the Americans then in Paris went in a body to the Convention, to reclaim me as their countryman and friend, but were answered by the president, Vadier, who was also President of the Committee of Surety-General, and had signed the order for my arrestation, that I was born in England. I heard no more after this, from any person out of the walls of the prison, till the fall of Robespierre, on the 9th of Thermidor—July 27, 1794.

About two months before this event, I was seized with a fever, that in its progress had every symptom of becoming mortal, and from the effects of which I am not recovered. It was then that I remembered with renewed satisfaction, and congratulated myself most sincerely, on having written the former part of the "Age of Reason." I had then but little expectation of surviving, and those about me had less. I know, therefore, by experience the conscientious trial of my own principles.

I was then with three chamber comrades, Joseph Vanhucle, of Bruges, Charles Bastini, and Michael Robyns, of

Louvain. The unceasing and anxious attention of these three friends to me, by night and by day, I remember with gratitude and mention with pleasure. It happened that a physician (Dr. Graham), and a surgeon (Mr. Bond), part of the suite of General O'Hara, were then in the Luxembourg: I ask not myself whether it be convenient to them, as men under the English Government, that I express to them my thanks, but I should reproach myself if I did not; and also to the physician of the Luxembourg, Dr. Markosi.

I have some reason to believe, because I cannot discover any other cause, that this illness preserved me in existence.

Among the papers of Robespierre that were examined and reported upon to the Convention by a Committee of Deputies, is a note in the handwriting of Robespierre, in the following words:—

"Demander que Thomas Paine soit decreté d'accusation, pour l'intérêt de l'Amerique autant que de la France."

Demand that Thomas Paine be decreed of accusation, for the interest of America as well as of France.

From what cause it was that the intention was not put in execution, I know not, and cannot inform myself; and therefore I ascribe it to impossibility, on account of that illness.

The Convention, to repair as much as lay in their power the injustice I had sustained, invited me publicly and unanimously to return into the Convention, and which I accepted, to show I could bear an injury without permitting it to injure my principles, or my disposition. It is not because right principles have been violated, that they are to be abandoned.

I have seen, since I have been at liberty, several publications, written, some in America, and some in England, as answers to the former part of the "Age of Reason." If the authors of these can amuse themselves by so doing, I shall not interrupt them. They may write against the work, and against me, as much as they please; they do me more service than they intend, and I can have no objection that they write on. They will find, however, by this second part, without its being written as an answer to them, that they must return to their work, and spin their cobweb over again. The first is brushed away by accident.

They will now find that I have furnished myself with a

Bible and Testament, and I can say also, that I have found them to be much worse books than I have conceived. If I have erred in anything, in the former part of the "Age of Reason," it has been by speaking better of some parts of those books than they deserved.

I believe, that all my opponents resort, more or less, to what they call Scripture Evidence and Bible Authority, to help them out. They are so little masters of the subject, as to confound a dispute about authenticity with a dispute about doctrines; I will, however, put them right, that if they should be disposed to write any more, they may know how to begin.

October, 1795. THOMAS PAINE.

It has often been said that anything may be proved from the Bible; but before anything can be admitted as proved by the Bible, the Bible itself must be proved to be true; for if the Bible be not true, or the truth of it be doubtful, it ceases to have authority, and cannot be admitted as proof of anything.

It has been the practice of all Christian commentators on the Bible, and of all Christian priests and preachers, to impose the Bible on the world as a mass of truth, and as the word of God; they have disputed and wrangled, and have anathematised each other about the supposable meaning of particular parts and passages therein; one has said and insisted that such a passage meant directly the contrary; and a third, that it neither meant one nor the other, but something different from both; and this they call *understanding* the Bible.

It has happened which all the answers I have seen to the former part of the "Age of Reason" have been written by priests; and these pious men, like their predecessors, contend and wrangle, and pretend to *understand* the Bible; each understands it differently. But each understands it best: and they have agreed in nothing but in telling their readers that Thomas Paine understands it not.

Now, instead of wasting their time, and heating themselves in fractious disputations about doctrinal points drawn from the Bible, these men ought to know, and if they do not, it is civility to inform them, that the first thing to be understood is, whether there is sufficient authority for

believing the Bible to be the word of God, or whether there is not.

There are matters in that book, said to be done by the *express command* of God, that are as shocking to humanity, and to every idea of moral justice, as anything done by Robespierre, by Carrier, by Joseph le Bon, in France; by the English Government, in the East Indies; or by any other assassin in modern times. When we read in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, &c., that they (the Israelites) came by stealth upon whole nations of people, who, as the history itself shows, had given them no offence, *that they put all those nations to the sword; that they spared neither age nor infancy; that they utterly destroyed men, women, and children; that they left not a soul to breathe;* expressions that are repeated over and over again in those books, and that too with exulting ferocity; are we sure these things are facts? are we sure that the Creator of man commissioned these things to be done? are we sure that the books that tell us so were written by his authority?

It is not the antiquity of a tale that is any evidence of its truth; on the contrary, it is a symptom of its being fabulous; for the more ancient any history pretends to be, the more it has the resemblance of a fable. The origin of every nation is buried in fabulous tradition, and that of the Jews is as much to be suspected as any other. To charge the commission of acts upon the Almighty, which in their own nature, and by every rule of moral justice, are crimes, as all assassination is, and more especially the assassination of infants, is matter of serious concern. The Bible tells us that those assassinations were done by the *express command of God.* To believe therefore the Bible to be true, we must *disbelieve* all our belief in the moral justice of God: for wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? And to read the Bible without horror, we must undo everything that is tender, sympathising, and benevolent in the heart of man. Speaking for myself, if I had no other evidence that the Bible is fabulous, than the sacrifice I must make to believe it to be true, that alone would be sufficient to determine my choice.

But, in addition to all the moral evidence against the Bible, I will, in the progress of this work, produce such other evidence, as even a priest cannot deny; and show

from that evidence, that the Bible is not entitled to credit, as being the word of God.

But before I proceed to this examination, I will show wherein the Bible differs from all other ancient writings with respect to the nature of the evidence necessary to establish its authenticity; and this is the more proper to be done, because the advocates of the Bible, in their answers to the former part of the "Age of Reason," undertake to say, and they put some stress thereon, that the authenticity of the Bible is as well established as that of any other ancient book; as if our belief of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other.

I know, however, but of one ancient book that authoritatively challenges universal consent and belief; and that is "Euclid's Elements of Geometry;"* and the reason is, because it is a book of self-evident demonstration, entirely independent of its author, and of everything relating to time, place, and circumstance. The matters contained in that book would have the same authority they now have, had they been written by any other person, or had the work been anonymous, or had the author never been known; for the identical certainty of who was the author, makes no part of our belief of the matters contained in the book. But it is quite otherwise with respect to the books ascribed to Moses, to Joshua, to Samuel, &c. Those are books of *Testimony*, and, they testify of things naturally incredible; and therefore the whole of our belief, as to the authenticity of those books, rests, in the first place, upon the *certainty* that they were written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, or were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel: secondly, upon the credit we give to their testimony. We may believe the first—that is, we may believe the certainty of the authorship—and yet not the testimony: in the same manner that we believe that a certain person gave evidence upon a case, and yet not believe the evidence that he gave. But if it should be found that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, every part of the authority and authenticity of

* Euclid, according to chronological history, lived three hundred years before Christ, and about one hundred years before Archimedes he was of the city of Alexandria, in Egypt.

those books is gone at once; for there can be no such thing as forged or invented testimony; neither can there be anonymous testimony more especially as to things naturally incredible—such as that of talking with God face to face, or that of the sun and moon standing still at the command of a man. The greatest part of the other ancient books are works of genius; of which kind are those ascribed to Homer, to Plato, to Aristotle, to Demosthenes, to Cicero, &c. Here again the author is not an essential in the credit we give to any of those works; for, as works of genius, they would have the same merit they have now, were they anonymous. Nobody believes the Trojan story, as related by Homer, to be true; for it is the poet only that is admired; and the merit of the poet will remain, though the story be fabulous. But, if we disbelieve the matters related by the Bible authors (Moses, for instance), as we disbelieve the things related by Homer, there remains nothing of Moses in our estimation but an imposter. As to the ancient historians from Herodotus to Tacitus, we credit them as far as they relate things probable and credible, and no further; for if we do, we must believe the two miracles which Tacitus relates were performed by Vespasian, that of curing a lame man and a blind man, in just the same manner as the same things are told of Jesus Christ by his historians. We must also believe the miracles cited by Josephus, that of the sea of Pamphilia opening to let Alexander and his army pass, as is related of the Red Sea, in Exodus. These miracles are quite as well authenticated as the Bible miracles, and yet we do not believe them; consequently the degree of evidence necessary to establish our belief of things naturally incredible, whether in the Bible or elsewhere, is far greater than that which obtains our belief to natural and probable things; and therefore the advocates for the Bible have no claim to our belief of the Bible, because we believe things stated in other ancient writings; since we believe the things stated in those writings no further than they are probable and credible: or because they are self-evident, like Euclid; or admire them because they are elegant, like Homer; or approve them because they are sedate, like Plato; or judicious, like Aristotle.

Having premised these things, I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible; and I begin with what are called

the five books of Moses: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. My intention is to show that those books are spurious, and that Moses is not the author of them: and still further, that they were not written in the time of Moses, nor till several hundred years afterwards; that they are no other than an attempted history of the life of Moses, and of the time in which he is said to have lived, and also of the times prior thereto, written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship, several hundred years after the death of Moses; as men now write histories of things that happened, or are supposed to have happened, several hundred or several thousand years ago.

The evidence that I shall produce in this case is from the books themselves; and I will confine myself to this evidence only. Were I to refer for proofs to any of the ancient authors, whom the advocates of the Bible call profane authors, they would controvert theirs; I will therefore meet them on their own ground, and oppose them with their own weapon, the Bible.

In the first place, there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of those books, and that he is the author is altogether an unfounded opinion got abroad nobody knows how. The style and manner in which those books are written, give no room to believe, or even to suppose, they were written by Moses: for it is altogether the style and manner of another person speaking of Moses. In Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers (for everything in Genesis is prior to the time of Moses, and not the least allusion is made to him therein), the whole, I say, of these books, is in the third person: it is always, "the Lord said unto Moses," or "Moses said unto the Lord," or "Moses said unto the people," or "the people said unto Moses:" and this is the style and manner that historians use, in speaking of the persons whose lives and actions they are writing. It may be said that a man may speak of himself in the third person, and therefore it may be supposed that Moses did: but supposition proves nothing, and if the advocates for the belief that Moses wrote those books himself have nothing better to advance than supposition, they may as well be silent.

But granting the grammatical right, that Moses might speak of himself in the third person, because any man might

speak of himself in that manner, it cannot be admitted as a fact in those books, that it is Moses who speaks, without rendering Moses truly ridiculous and absurd—for example, Numbers, chap. xii., verse 3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." If Moses said this of himself, instead of being the meekest of men, he was one of the most vain and arrogant of coxcombs; and the advocates for those books may now take which side they please, for both sides are against them: if Moses was not the author, the books are without authority, and if he was the author, the author is without credit, because the boast of *meekness* is the reverse of meekness, and is *a lie in sentiment.*

In Deuteronomy, the style and manner of writing marks more evidently than in the former books that Moses is not the writer. The manner here used is dramatical: the writer opens the subject by a short introductory discourse, and then introduces Moses as in the act of speaking; and when he has made Moses finish his harangue, he (the writer) resumes his own part, and speaks till he brings Moses forward again, and at last closes the scene with an account of the death, funeral, and character of Moses.

This interchange of speakers occurs four times in this book: from the 1st verse of the 1st chapter, to the end of the 5th verse, it is the writer who speaks; he then introduces Moses as in the act of making his harangue, and this continues to the end of the 40th verse of the 4th chapter; here the writer drops Moses, and speaks historically of what was done in consequence of what Moses, when living, is supposed to have said, and which the writer has dramatically rehearsed.

The writer opens the subject again, in the 1st verse of the 5th chapter, though it is only by saying, that Moses called the people of Israel together; he then introduces Moses as before, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 26th chapter. He does the same thing at the beginning of the 27th chapter; and continues Moses, as in the act of speaking, to the 28th chapter. At the 29th chapter, the writer speaks again through the whole of the 1st verse, and the 1st line of the 2nd verse, where he introduces Moses for the last time and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 33rd chapter.

The writer having now finished the rehearsal on the part of Moses, comes forward, and speaks through the whole of the last chapter; he begins by telling the reader that Moses went up to the top of Pisgah; that he saw from thence the land which (the writer says) had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: that he, Moses, died there, in the land of Moab, but that no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day; that is, unto the time in which the writer lived who wrote the book of Deuteronomy. The writer then tells us, that Moses was 110 years of age when he died—that his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; and he concludes, by saying, that there arose not a prophet *since* in Israel like unto Moses, whom, says this anonymous writer, the Lord knew face to face.

Having thus shown, as far as grammatical evidence applies, that Moses was not the writer of those books, I will, after making a few observations on the inconsistencies of the writer of the book of Deuteronomy, proceed to show, from the historical and chronological evidence contained in those books, that Moses was not, because *he could not be*, the writer of them; and, consequently, that there is no authority for believing that the inhuman and horrid butcheries of men, women, and children, told of in those books, were done, as those books say they were, at the command of God. It is a duty incumbent on every true Deist, that he vindicate the moral justice of God, against the calumnies of the Bible.

The writer of the book of Deuteronomy, whoever he was, for it is an anonymous work, is obscure, and also in contradiction with himself, in the account he has given of Moses.

After telling that Moses went to the top of Pisgah (and it does not appear from any account that he ever came down again) he tells us, that Moses died *there* in the land of Moab, and that *he* buried him in a valley in the land of Moab; but as there is no antecedent to the pronoun *he*, there is no knowing who *he* was that did bury him. If the writer meant that *he* (God) buried him how should *he* (the writer) know it? or why should we (the readers) believe him? since we know not who the writer was that tells us so, for certainly Moses could not himself tell where he was buried.

The writer also tells us that no man knoweth where the sepulchre of Moses is *unto this day*, meaning the time in

which this writer lived; how then should he know that Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab? for as the writer lived long after the time of Moses, as is evident from his using the expression of *unto this day*, meaning a great length of time after the death of Moses, he certainly was not at his funeral: and on the other hand, it is impossible that Moses himself could say, that *no man knoweth where the sepulchre is unto this day.* To make Moses the speaker, would be an improvement on the play of a child that hides himself, and cries *nobody can find me*—nobody can find Moses.

This writer has nowhere told us how he came by the speeches which he has put into the mouth of Moses to speak, and therefore we have a right to conclude, that he either composed them himself, or wrote them from oral tradition. One or other of these is the more probable, since he has given in the fifth chapter a table of commandments, in which that called the fourth commandment is different from the fourth commandment in the twentith chapter of Exodus. In that of Exodus, the reason given for keeping the seventh day is, "because [says the commandment] God made the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh;" but in that of Deuteronomy, the reason given is, that it was the day on which the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and *therefore*, says this commandment, *the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day. This* makes no mention of the creation, nor *that* of the coming out of Egypt. There are also many things given as laws of Moses in this book, that are not to be found in any of the other books; among which is that inhuman and brutal law, chapter xxi., verses 18, 19, 20, 21, which authorises parents, the father and the mother, to bring their own children to have them stoned to death for what it is pleased to call stubbornness. But priests have always been fond of preaching up Deuteronomy, for Deuteronomy preaches up tithes; and it is from this book, chapter xxv., verse 4, they have taken the phrase, and applied it to the tithing, that *thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn;* and that this might not escape observation, they have noted it in the table of contents at the head of the chapter, though it is only a single verse of less than two lines. O priests! priests! ye are willing to be compared to an ox for the sake

of tithes. Though it is impossible for us to know *identically* who the writer of Deuteronomy was, it is not difficult to discover him *professionally*, that he was some Jewish priest who lived, as I shall show in the course of this work, at least three hundred and fifty years after the time of Moses.

I come now to speak of the historical and chronological evidence. The chronology that I shall use is the Bible Chronology; for I mean not to go out of the Bible for evidence of anything, but to make the Bible itself prove historically and chronologically that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him. It is therefore proper that I inform the reader (such an one at least as may not have opportunity of knowing it) that in the larger Bibles, and also in some smaller ones, there is a series of chronology printed in the margin of every page, for the purpose of showing how long the historical matters stated in each page happened, or are supposed to have happened, before Christ, and consequently the distance of time between one historical circumstance and another.

I begin with the book of Genesis. In the 14th chapter of Genesis, the writer gives an account of Lot being taken prisoner in a battle between the four kings against five, and carried off; and that when the account of Lot being taken came to Abraham, he armed all his household, and marched to rescue Lot from the captors; and that he pursued them unto Dan (verse 14.)

To show in what manner this expression of *pursuing them unto Dan* applies to the case in question, I will refer to two circumstances; the one in America, the other in France. The city now called New York, in America, was originally New Amsterdam; and the town in France, lately called Havre Marat, was before called Havre-de-Grace. New Amsterdam was changed to New York in the Year 1664: Havre-de-Grace to Havre Marat in the year 1793. Should, therefore, any writing be found, though without date, in which the name of New York should be mentioned, it would be certain evidence that such writing could not have been written before, and must have been written after New Amsterdam was changed to New York, and consequently not till after the year 1664, or at least during the course of that year. And, in like manner, any dateless writing with the name of Havre Marat would be certain evidence that

such a writing must have been written after Havre-de-Grace became Havre Marat, and consequently not till after the year 1793, or at least during the course of that year.

I now come to the application of those cases, and to show that there was no such place as *Dan* till many years after the death of Moses; and consequently that Moses could not be the writer of the book of Genesis, where this account of pursuing them unto *Dan* is given.

The place that is called Dan in the Bible, was originally a town of the Gentiles, called Laish; and when the tribe of Dan seized upon this town they changed its name to Dan, in commemoration of Dan, who was the father of that tribe, and the great grandson of Abraham.

To establish this in proof, it is necessary to refer from Genesis, to the 18th chapter of the book called the book of Judges. It is there said (ver. 27) *that they* (the Danites) *came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure, and they smote them with the edge of the sword* (the Bible is filled with murder) *and burnt the city with fire; and they built a city* (ver. 28) and dwelt therein, *and they called the name of the city Dan after the name of Dan, their father, howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.*

This account of the Danites taking possession of Laish, and changing it to Dan, is placed in the book of Judges immediately after the death of Samson. The death of Samson is said to have happened 1120 years before Christ, and that of Moses 1451 before Christ; and therefore, according to the historical arrangement, the place was not called Dan till 331 years after the death of Moses.

There is a striking confusion between the historical and the chronological arrangement in the book of Judges. The five last chapters as they stand in the book 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, are put chronologically before all the preceding chapters; they are made to be 28 years before the 16th chapter, 266 before the 15th, 245 before the 13th, 195 before the 9th, 90 before the 4th, and 15 years before the 1st chapter. This shows the uncertain and fabulous state of the Bible. According to the chronological arrangement, the taking of Laish, and giving it the name of Dan, is made to be 20 years after the death of Joshua, who was the successor of Moses; and by the historical order, as it stands in the book, it is made to be 306 years after the death of Joshua, and 331

after that of Moses; but they both exclude Moses from being the writer of Genesis, because, according to either of the statements, no such place as Dan existed in the time of Moses; and therefore the writer of Genesis must have been some person who lived after the town of Laish had the name of Dan; and who that person was nobody knows, and consequently the book of Genesis is anonymous, and without authority.

I proceed now to state another point of historical and chronological evidence, and to show therefrom, as in the preceding case, that Moses is not the author of the book of Genesis.

In the 36th chapter of Genesis there is given a genealogy of the sons and descendants of Esau, who are called Edomites, and also a list, by name, of the kings of Edom: in enumerating which, it is said, verse 31, "*And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.*"

Now, were any dateless writings to be found, in which, speaking of any past events, the writer should say,—These things happened before there was any congress in America, or before there was any convention in France, it would be evidence that such writing could not have been written before, and could only be written after there was a congress in America, or a convention in France, as the case might be; and consequently that it could not be written by any person who died before there was a congress in the one country, or a convention in the other.

Nothing is more frequent, as well in history as in conversation, than to refer to a fact in the room of a date: it is most natural so to do; first, because a fact fixes itself in the memory better than a date; secondly, because the fact includes the date, and serves to excite two ideas at once: and this manner of speaking by circumstances implies as positively that the fact alluded to is *past*, as if it were so expressed. When a person, speaking upon any matter, says, It was before I was married, or before my son was born, or before I went to America, or before I went to France, it is absolutely understood, and intended to be understood, that he has been married, that he has had a son, that he has been in America, or been in France. Language does not admit of using this mode of expression in any other sense: and

whenever such an expression is found anywhere, it can only be understood in the sense in which only it could have been used.

The passage, therefore, that I have quoted, that "these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned *any* king over the children of Israel," could only have been written after the first king began to reign over them; and, consequently, the book of Genesis, so far from having been written by Moses, could not have been written till the time of Saul at least. This is the positive sense of the passage; but the expression, *any* king, implies more kings than one, at least it implies two; and this will carry it to the time of David, and, if taken in a general sense, it carries itself through all the times of the Jewish monarchy.

Had we met with this verse in any part of the Bible that *professed* to have been written after kings began to reign in Israel, it would have been impossible not to have seen the application of it. It happens then that this is the case: the two books of Chronicles, which give a history of all the kings of Israel are *professedly*, as well as in fact, written after the Jewish monarchy began; and this verse that I have quoted, and all the remaining verses of the 36th chapter of Genesis, are, word for word, in the 1st chapter of Chronicles, beginning at the 43rd verse.

It was with consistency, that the writer of the Chronicles could say, as he has said, 1 Chronicles, chapter i., verse 43, "*these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the children of Israel;*" because he was going to give, and has given, a list of all the kings that had reigned in Israel; but as it is impossible that the same expression could have been used before that period, it is as certain as anything can be proved from historical language, that this part of Genesis is taken from Chronicles, and that Genesis is not so old as Chronicles, and probably not so old as the book of Homer, or as Æsop's fables; admitting Homer to have been, as the tables of Chronology state, contemporary with David or Solomon, and Æsop to have lived about the end of the Jewish monarchy.

Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of Genesis but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary

or invented absurdities, or of downright lies. The story of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, drops to a level with the Arabian tales, without the merit of being entertaining; and the account of men living to eight and nine hundred years becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants of the Mythology.

Besides, the character of Moses, as stated in the Bible, is the most horrid that can be imagined. If those accounts be true, he was the wretch that first began and carried on wars, on the score, or on the pretence of religion; and under that mask, or that infatuation, committed the most unexampled atrocities that are to be found in the history of any nation, of which I will state only one instance.

When the Jewish army returned from one of their plundering and murdering excursions, the account goes on as follow, Numbers, chapter xxxi., verse 13:—

"And Moses and Eleazer the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle, and Moses said unto them, *Have ye saved all the women alive?* behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord, in the matter of Peor; and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now, therefore, *kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him; but all the women children that have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.*"

Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than Moses if this account be true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters.

Let any mother put herself in the situation of those mothers: one child murdered, another destined to violation, and herself in the hands of an executioner; let any daughter put herself in the situation of those daughters, destined as a prey to the murderers of a mother and a brother, and what will be their feelings? It is in vain that we attempt to impose upon nature, for nature will have her course, and the religion that tortures all her social ties is a false religion.

After this detestable order, follows an account of the plunder taken, and the manner of dividing it; and here it is that the profaneness of priestly hypocrisy increases the catalogue of crimes. Verse 37 to 40, "*And the Lord's tribute* of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen: and the beeves were thirty and six thousand, of which the *Lord's tribute* was three score and twelve: and the asses were thirty thousand and five hundred, of which the Lord's tribute was three score and one, and the persons were sixteen thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two persons

In short, the matters contained in this chapter, as well as in many other parts of the Bible, are too horrid for humanity to read, or for decency to hear; for it appears from the 35th verse of this chapter, that the number of women and children consigned to debauchery by the order of Moses was thirty-two thousand.

People in general knew not what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. Brought up in habits of superstition, they take it for granted that the Bible is true, and that it is good; they permit themselves not to doubt of it, and they carry the ideas they form of the benevolence of the Almighty of the book which they have been taught to believe was written by his authority. Good heavens! it is quite another thing; it is a book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy; for what can be greater blasphemy, than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?

But to return to my subject, that of showing that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him, and that the Bible is spurious. The two instances I have already given would be sufficient, without any additional evidence, to invalidate the authenticity of any book that pretended to be four or five hundred years more ancient than the matters it speaks of or refers to as facts; for, in the case of *pursuing them unto Dan*, and of *the kings that reigned over the children of Israel*, not even the flimsy pretence of prophecy can be pleaded. The expressions are in the preter-tense, and it would be downright idiotism to say that a man could prophecy in the preter-tense.

But there are many other passages scattered throughout these books that unite in the same point of evidence. It is

said in Exodus (another of the books ascribed to Moses), chapter xvi., verse 34, "And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years *until they came to a land inhabited;* they did eat manna *until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.*"

Whether the children of Israel ate manna or not, or what manna was, or whether it was anything more than a kind of fungus or small mushroom, or other vegetable substance common to that part of the country, makes nothing to my argument; all that I mean to show is, that it is not Moses that could write this account, because the account extends itself beyond the life and time of Moses. Moses, according to the Bible (but it is such a book of lies and contradictions there is no knowing which part to believe, or whether any), died in the wilderness, and never came upon the borders of the land of Canaan; and consequently it could not be he that said what the children of Israel did or what they ate when they came there. This account of eating manna, which they tell us was written by Moses, extends itself to the time of Joshua, the successor of Moses; as appears by the account given in the book of Joshua, after the children of Israel had passed the river Jordan, and came unto the borders of the land of Canaan, Joshua chapter v., verse 12, "*And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*"

But a more remarkable instance than this occurs in Deuteronomy: which, while it shows that Moses could not be the writer of that book, shows also the fabulous notions that prevailed at that time about giants. In the third chapter of Deuteronomy, among the conquests said to be made by Moses, is an account of the taking of Og, king of Bashan. Verse 11, "For only Og, king of Bashan, remained of the remnants of the giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron: is it not in Rabbath, of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man." A cubit is 1 foot 9,888-1000ths inches; the length, therefore, of the bed was sixteen feet four inches, and the breadth seven feet four inches; thus much for this giant's bed. Now for the historical part, which, though the evidence is not so direct and

positive as in the former cases, is nevertheless very presumable and corroborating evidence, and is better than the *best* evidence on the contrary side.

The writer, by way of proving the existence of this giant, refers to his bed as to an *ancient relic*, and says, is it not in Pabbath (or Rabbah) of the children of Ammon? meaning that it is; for such is frequently the Bible method of affirming a thing. But it could not be Moses that said this, because Moses could know nothing about Rabbah, nor of what was in it. Rabbah was not a city belonging to this giant king, nor was it one of the cities that Moses took. The knowledge, therefore, that this bed was at Rabbah, and of the particulars of its dimensions, must be referred to the time when Rabbah was taken, and this was not till 400 years after the death of Moses; for which see 2 Samuel, chapter xii., verse 26: "And Joab (David's general) fought against *Rabbah of the children of Ammon*, and took the royal city."

As I am not undertaking to point out all the contradictions in time, place, and circumstance, that abound in the books ascribed to Moses, and which prove to a demonstration that those books could not be written by Moses, nor in the time of Moses, I proceed to the book of Joshua, and to show that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous, and without authority. The evidence I shall produce is contained in the book itself. I will not go out of the Bible for proof against the supposed authenticity of the Bible. False testimony is always good against itself.

Joshua, according to the 1st chapter of Joshua, was the immediate successor of Moses; he was, moreover, a military man, which Moses was not; and he continued as chief of the people of Israel twenty-five years—that is, from the time that Moses died, which, according to the Bible chronology, was 1451 years before Christ, until 1426 years before Christ, when, according to the same chronology, Joshua died. If, therefore, we find in this book, said to have been written by Joshua, reference to *facts done* after the death of Joshua, it is evidence that Joshua could not be the author, and also that the book could not have been written till after the time of the latest fact which it records. As to the character of the book, it is horrid; it is a military history of rapine and murder, as savage and brutal as those recorded

of his predecessor in villainy and hypocrisy, Moses; and the blasphemy consists, as in the former books, in ascribing those deeds to the orders of the Almighty.

In the first place, the book of Joshua, as is the case in the preceding books, is written in the third person; it is the historian of Joshua that speaks, for it would have been absurd and vainglorious that Joshua should say of himself, as is said of him in the last verse of the 6th chapter, that "*his fame was noised throughout all the country.*" I now come more immediately to the proof.

In the 24th chapter, verse 31, it is said: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and *all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua.*" Now, in the name of common sense, can it be Joshua that relates what people had done after he was dead? This account must not only have been written by some historian that lived after Joshua, but that lived also after the elders that out-lived Joshua.

There are several passages of a general meaning with respect to time scattered throughout the book of Joshua, that carries the time in which the book was written to a distance from the time of Joshua, but without marking by exclusion any particular time, as in the passage above quoted. In that passage the time that intervened between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders is excluded descriptively and absolutely, and the evidence substantiates that the book could not have been written till after the death of the last.

But though the passages to which I allude, and which I am going to quote, do not designate any particular time by exclusion, they imply a time far more distant from the days of Joshua, than is contained between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders. Such is the passage, chapter x., verse 14, where, after giving an account that the sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, at the command of Joshua (a tale only fit to amuse children), the passage says: 'And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man."

This tale of the sun standing still upon mount Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, is one of those fables that detect itself. Such a circumstance could not have

happened without being known all over the world. One half would have wondered why the sun did not rise, and the other why it did not set, and the tradition of it would be universal; whereas, there is not a nation in the world that knows anything about it. But why must the moon stand still? What occasion could there be for moonlight in the daytime, and that too whilst the sun shined? As a poetical figure the whole is well enough; it is akin to that in the song of Deborah and Baruk—*The stars in their courses fought against Sisera;* but it is inferior to the figurative declaration of Mahomet to the person who came to expostulate with him on his goings on: *Wert thou to come to me with the sun in thy right hand, and the moon in thy left, it should not alter my career.* For Joshua to have exceeded Mahomet, he should have put the sun and moon one in each pocket, and carried them as Guy Fawkes carried his dark lanthorn, and take them out to shine as he might happen to want them.

The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again; the account, however, abstracted from the poetical fancy, shows the ignorance of Joshua, for he should have commanded the earth to have stood still.

The time implied by the expression *after it*—that is. after that day—being put in comparison with all the time that passed *before it*, must, in order to give any expressive signification to the passage, mean a *great length of time.* For example, it would have been ridiculous, to have said to the next day, or the next week, or the next month, or the next year; to give, therefore, meaning to the passage, comparative to the wonder it relates, and the prior time it alludes to, it must mean centuries of years; less, however, than one would be trifling, and less than two would be barely admissible.

A distant, but general time, is also expressed in the 8th chapter; where, after giving an account of the taking of the city of Ai, it is said, verse 28, "And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation *unto this day;*", and again, verse 29, where, speaking of the king of Ai, whom Joshua had hanged and buried at the entrance of the gate, it is

said, "And he raised thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day;" that is, unto the day or time in which the writer of the book of Joshua lived. And again, in the 10th chapter, where, after speaking of the five kings whom Joshua had hanged on five trees, and then thrown in a cave, it is said, "And he laid great stones on the cave's mouth, which remain unto this very day."

In enumerating the several exploits of Joshua, and of the tribes and of the places which they conquered or attempted, it is said, chapter xv., verse 63, "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah *at Jerusalem unto this day.*" The question upon this passage is, at what time did the Jebusites and the children of Judah dwell together at Jerusalem? As this matter occurs again in the first chapter of Judges, I shall reserve my observations till I come to that part.

Having thus shown from the book of Joshua itself, without any auxiliary evidence whatever, that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous and consequently without authority, I proceed, as before mentioned, to the book of Judges.

The book of Judges is anonymous on the face of it; and therefore even the pretence in wanting to call it the word of God; it has not so much as a nominal voucher; it is altogether fatherless.

This book begins with the same expression as the book of Joshua. That of Joshua begins, chapter i., verse 1, "*Now after the death of Moses,*" &c., and this of Judges begins, "*Now after the death of Joshua,*" &c. This, and the similarity of style between the two books, indicate that they are the work of the same author; but who he was is altogether unknown; the only point that the book proves, is that the author lived long after the time of Joshua, for though it begins as if it followed immediately after his death, the second chapter is an epitome, or abstract, of the whole book, which, according to the Bible chronology, extends its history through a space of 306 years—that is, from the death of Joshua, 1426 years before Christ, to the death of Samson, 1120 before Christ, and only 25 years before Saul went to *seek his father's asses, and was made king.* But there is good reason to believe, that it was not written till the time of

David at least, and that the book of Joshua was not written before same time.

In the first chapter of Judges, the writer, after announcing the death of Joshua, proceeds to tell what happened between the children of Judah and the native inhabitants of the land of Canaan. In this statement, the writer, having abruptly mentioned Jerusalem in the 7th verse, says immediately after, in the 8th verse, by way of explanation, "Now the children of Judah *had* fought against Jerusalem and had *taken* it;" consequently this book could not have been written before Jerusalem had been taken. The reader will recollect the quotation I have just before made from the 15th chapter of Joshua, verse 63, where it is said, that the "*Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day;*" meaning the time when the book of Joshua was written.

The evidence I have already produced to prove that the books I have hitherto treated of were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, nor till many years after their death, if such persons ever lived, is already so abundant, that I can afford to admit this passage with less weight than I am entitled to draw from it. For the case is, that so far as the Bible can be credited as a history, the city of Jerusalem was not taken till the time of David; and, consequently, that the books of Joshua and of Judges were not written till after the commencement of the reign of David, which was 370 years after the death of Joshua.

The name of the city that was afterwards called Jerusalem, was originally Jebus or Jebusi, and was the capital of the Jebusites. The account of David's taking this city is given in 2 Samuel, chapter v., verse 4, &c.; also in 1 Chronicles, chapter xiv., verse 4, &c. There is no mention in any part of the Bible that it was ever taken before, nor any account that favors such an opinion. It is not said, either in Samuel or in the Chronicles, that they *utterly destroyed men, women, and children that they left not a soul to breathe*, as is said of their other conquests; and the silence here observed implies that it was taken by capitulation, and that the Jebusites, the native inhabitants, continued to live in the place after it was taken. The account, therefore, given in Joshua, that *the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah* at

Jerusalem unto this day, corresponds to no other time than after the taking of the city by David.

Having now shown that every book in the Bible, from Genesis to Judges, is without authenticity, I come to the book of Ruth, an idle, bungling story, foolishly told, nobody knows by whom, about a strolling country girl creeping slily to bed to her cousin Boaz. Pretty stuff indeed to be called the word of God! It is, however, one of the best books in the Bible, for it is free from murder and rapine.

I come next to the two books of Samuel, and to show that those books were not written by Samuel, nor till a great length of time after the death of Samuel; and that they are, like all the former books, anonymous, and without authority.

To be convinced that these books have been written much later than the time of Samuel, and consequently not by him, it is only necessary to read the account which the writer gives of Saul going to seek his father's asses, and of his interview with Samuel, of whom Saul went to inquire about those lost asses, as foolish people now-a-days go to a conjurer to inquire after lost things.

The writer, in relating the story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses, does not tell it as a thing that had just happened, but as an ancient story in the time this writer lived; for he tells us in the language or terms used at the time that *Samuel* lived, which obliges the writer to explain this story in the terms or language used in the time the *writer* lived.

Samuel, in the account given of him in the first of those books, chapter ix., is called the seer: and it is by this term that Saul inquires after him. Verse 11, "And as they [Saul and his servant] went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?" Saul then went according to the direction of these maidens, and met Samuel without knowing him, and said unto him, verse 18, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer."

As the writer of the book of Samuel relates these questions and answers, in the language or manner of speaking used in the time they are said to have been spoken, and as that manner of speaking was out of use when this author wrote, he found it necessary, in order to make the story

understood, to explain the terms in which these questions and answers are spoken: and he does this in the 9th verse, where he says, "Beforetime, in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer." This proves, as I have before said, that this story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses, was an ancient story at the time the book of Samuel was written, and consequently that Samuel did not write it, and that that book is without authenticity.

But if we go further into those books, the evidence is still more positive that Samuel is not the writer of them; for they relate things that did not happen till several years after the death of Samuel. Samuel died before Saul, for the first Samuel, chapter xxviii., tells that Saul and the witch of Endor conjured Samuel up after he was dead; yet the history of the matters contained in those books is extended through the remaining part of Saul's life, and to the latter end of the life of David, who succeeded Saul. The account of the death and burial of Samuel (a thing which he could not write himself), is related in the 25th chapter of the first book of Samuel; and the chronology affixed to this chapter makes this to be 1060 years before Christ; yet the history of this *first* book is brought down to 1056 years before Christ; that is, to the death of Saul, which was not till four years after the death of Samuel.

The second book of Samuel begins with an account of things that did not happen till four years after Samuel was dead; for it begins with the reign of David, who succeeded Saul, and it goes on to the end of David's reign, which was forty-three years after the death of Samuel: and, therefore, the books are in themselves positive evidence that they were written by Samuel.

I have now gone through all the books in the first part of the Bible, to which the names of persons are affixed as being the authors of those books, and which the church, styling itself the Christian church, have imposed upon the world as the writings of Moses, Joshua, and Samuel: and I have detected and proved the falsehood of this imposition. And now, ye priests of every description, who have preached and written against the former part of the "Age of Reason," what have ye to say? Will ye, with all this mass of evidence

against you, and staring you in the face, still have the assurance to march into your pulpits, and continue to impose these books on your congregations as the works of *inspired penmen*, and the word of God, when it is as evident as demonstration can make truth appear, that the persons who, ye say, are the authors, are not the authors, and that ye know not who the authors are? What shadow of pretence have ye now to produce, for continuing the blasphemous fraud? What have ye still to offer against the pure and moral religion of Deism, in support of your system of falsehood, idolatry, and pretended revelation? Had the cruel and murderous orders with which the Bible is filled, and the numberless torturing executions of men, women, and children, in consequence of those orders, been ascribed to some friend, whose memory you revered, you would have glowed with satisfaction at detecting the falsehood of the charge, and gloried in defending his injured fame. Is it because ye are sunk in the cruelty of superstition, or feel no interest in the honor of your Creator, that ye listen to the horrid tales of the Bible, or hear them with callous indifference? The evidence I have produced, and shall still produce, in the course of this work, to prove that the Bible is without authority, will, whilst it wounds the stubbornness of a priest, relieve and tranquilise the minds of millions; it will free them from all those hard thoughts of the Almighty which priestcraft and the Bible had infused into their minds, and which stood in everlasting opposition to all their ideas of his moral justice and benevolence.

I come now to the two books of Kings and the two books of Chronicles. These books are altogether historical, and are chiefly confined to the lives and actions of the Jewish kings, who, in general, were a parcel of rascals; but these are matters with which we have no more concern than we have with the Roman emperors, or Homer's account of the Trojan war. Besides which, as those works are anonymous, and as we know nothing of the writer, or of his character, it is impossible for us to know what degree of credit to give to the matters related therein. Like all other ancient histories, they appear to be a jumble of fable and fact, and of probable and of improbable things; but which distance of time and place, and change of circumstances in the world, have rendered obsolete and uninteresting.

The chief use I shall make of those books will be that of comparing them with each other, and with other parts of the Bible, to show the confusion, contradiction, and cruelty in this pretended word of God.

The first book of Kings begins with the reign of Solomon, which, according to the Bible chronology, was 1015 years before Christ; and the second book ends 588 years before Christ, being a little after the reign Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, after taking Jerusalem and conquering the Jews, carried captive to Babylon. The two books include a space of 427 years.

The two books of Chronicles are a history of the same times, and in general of the same persons, by another author; for it would be absurd to suppose that the same author wrote the history twice over. The first book of Chronicles (after giving the genealogy from Adam to Saul, which takes up the first nine chapters) begins with the reign of David; and the last book ends, as in the last book of Kings, soon after the reign of Zedekiah, about 588 years before Christ. The two last verses of the last chapter bring the history fifty-two years more forward—that is, to 536. But these verses do not belong to the book, as I shall show when I come to speak of the book of Ezra.

The two books of Kings, besides the history of Saul, David, and Solomon, who reigned over *all* Israel, contain an abstract of the lives of seventeen kings and one queen, who are styled kings of Judah; and of nineteen, who are styled kings of Israel: for the Jewish nation, immediately on the death of Solomon, split into two parties, who chose separate kings, and carried on most rancorous wars against each other.

Those two books are little more than a history of assassinations, treachery, and wars. The cruelties that the Jews had accustomed themselves to practise on the Canaanites, whose country they had savagely invaded under a pretended gift from God, they afterwards practised as furiously on each other. Scarcely half their kings died a natural death, and, in some instances, whole families were destroyed to secure possession to the successor; who, after a few years, and sometimes only a few months, or less, share the same fate. In the tenth chapter of the second book of Kings, an account is given of two baskets full of children's

heads, seventy in number, being exposed at the entrance of the city: they were the children of Ahab, and were murdered by the order of Jehu, whom Elisha, the pretended man of God, had anointed to be king over Israel, on purpose to commit this bloody deed, and assassinate his predecessor. And in the account of the reign of Manaham, on of the kings of Israel, who had murdered Shallum, who had reigned but one month, it said, 2 Kings, chapter xv., verse 16, "Then Manaham smote the city of Tiphsah, because they opened not to him, *and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.*

Could we permit ourselves to suppose that the Almighty would distinguish any nation of people by the name of *his chosen people*, we must suppose that people to have been an example to all the rest of the world, of the purest piety and humanity, and not such a nation of ruffians and cut-throats as the ancient Jews were; a people who, corrupted by and copying after such monsters and imposters as Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, and David, had distinguished themselves above all others on the face of the known earth for barbarity and wickedness. If we will not stubbornly shut our eyes and steel our hearts, it is impossible not to see, in spite of all that long-established superstition imposes upon the mind, that the flattering appellation of *his chosen people* is no other than a *lie*, which the priests and leaders of the Jews had invented to cover the baseness of their own characters: and which Christian priests, sometimes as corrupt, and often as cruel, have professed to believe.

The two books of Chronicles are a repetition of the same crimes; but the history is broken in several places by the author leaving out the reign of some of their kings, and in this, as well as in that of Kings, there is such a frequent transition from kings of Judah to kings of Israel, and from kings of Israel to kings of Judah, that the narrative is obscure in the reading. In the same book, the history sometimes contradicts itself: for example, in the second book of Kings, chapter i., verse 17, we are told, but in rather ambiguous terms, that after the death of Ahaziah, King of Israel, Jehoram, or Joram (who was of the house of Ahab), reigned in his stead in the *second year* of Jehoram, or Joram, son of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah; and in chapter viii., verse 16, of the same book, it is said, And in

the *fifth year* of Joram, the son of Ahab, King of Israel (Jehoshaphat being then King of Judah), began to reign: that is, one chapter says Joram of Judah began to reign in the *second year* of Joram of Israel; and the other chapter says, that Joram of Israel began to reign in the *fifth year* of Joram of Judah. Several of the most extraordinary matters related in one history as having happened during the reign of such and such of their kings, are not to be found in the other, in relating the reign of the same king; for example, the two first rival kings, after the death of Solomon, were Rehoboam and Jeroboam; and in 1 Kings, chapters xii. and xiii., an account is given of Jeroboam making an offering of burnt incense, and that a man, who is there called a man of God, cried out against the altar, chapter xiii., verse 2, "O altar! altar! thus saith the Lord: Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon these shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." Verse 4, "And it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar, in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, *Lay hold on him;* and his hand which he put forth against him *dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.*

One would think that such an extraordinary case as this (which is spoken of as a judgment), happening to the chief one of the parties, and that at the first moment of the separation of the Israelites into two nations, would, if it had been true, been recorded in both histories. But though men in later times have believed *all that the prophets have said unto them*, it does not appear that these prophets, or historians, believed each other: they knew each other too well.

A long account is also given in Kings about Elijah. It runs through several chapters, and concludes with telling, 2 Kings, chapter ii., verse 11, "And it came to pass, as they (Elijah and Elisha) still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a *chariot of fire, and horses of fire*, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah *went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*" Hum! this the author of Chronicles, miraculous as the story is, makes no mention of, though he mentions Elijah by name: neither does he say anything of

the story related in the second chapter of the same book of Kings, of a parcel of children calling Elisha, *bald head, bald head;* and that this *man of God*, verse 24, "turned back and looked upon them, *and cursed them in the name of the Lord*, and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tore forty-and-two children of them." He also passes over in silence the story told, 2 Kings, chapter xiii., that when they were burying a man in the sepulchre where Elisha had been buried, it happened that the dead man, as they were letting him down (verse 21), "touched the bones of Elisha, and he (the dead man), *revived and stood up on his feet.*" The story does not tell us whether they buried the man, notwithstanding he revived and stood up on his feet, or drew him up again. Upon all these stories the writer of Chronicles is as silent as any writer of the present day, who did not choose to be accused of lying, or at least of romancing, would be about stories of the same kind.

But, however these two historians may differ from each other with respect to the tales related by either, they are silent alike with respect to those men styled prophets, whose writings fill up the latter part of the Bible. Isaiah, who lived in the time of Hezekiah, is mentioned in Kings, and again in Chronicles, when these historians are speaking of that reign, but except in one or two instances at most, and those very slightly, none of the rest are so much as spoken of, or even their existence hinted at; though, according to the Bible chronology, they lived within the time those histories were written, some of them long before. If those prophets, as they are called, were of such importance in their day as the compilers of the Bible, and priests and commentators have since represented them to be, how can it be accounted for, that not one of these histories should say anything about them?

The history in the books of Kings and of Chronicles is brought forward as I have already said to the year 588 before Christ: it will, therefore, be proper to examine which of these prophets lived before that period.

Here follows a table of all the prophets with the times in which they lived before Christ, according to the chronology affixed to the first chapter of each of the books of the prophets; and also the number of years they lived before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written.

Table of the Prophets, with the time in which they lived before Christ and also before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written.

NAMES.	Years bef. Christ.	Years bef. Kings and Chron.	Observations.
Isaiah	760	172	mentioned.
Jeremiah	629	41	mentioned only in the last chapt. of Chronicles.
Ezekiel	595	7	not mentioned.
Daniel	607	19	not mentioned.
Hosea	785	97	not mentioned.
Joel	800	212	not mentioned.
Amos	789	199	not mentioned.
Obadiah	789	199	not mentioned.
Jonah	862	274	see the note.*
Micah	750	162	not mentioned.
Nahum	713	125	not mentioned.
Habakuk	626	38	not mentioned.
Zephaniah	630	42	not mentioned.
Haggai ... Zechariah Malachi	after the year 588.		

This table is either not very honorable for the Bible historians, or not very honorable for the Bible prophets; and I leave to priests and commentators, who are very learned in little things, to settle the point of *etiquette* between the two; and to assign a reason why the authors of Kings and Chronicles have treated those prophets, whom, in the former part of the "Age of Reason," I have considered as poets, with as much degrading silence as any historian of the present day would treat Peter Pindar.

I have one observation more to make on the Book of Chronicles, after which I shall pass on to review the remaining books of the Bible.

In my observations on the book of Genesis, I have quoted a passage from the 36th chapter, verse 31, which evidently refers to a time *after* kings began to reign over the children

* In 2 Kings, chapter xiv., verse 25, the name of Jonah is mentioned on account of the restoration of a tract of land by Jeroboam, but nothing further is said of him, nor is any allusion made to the book of Jonah, nor to his expedition to Nineveh, nor to his encounter with a whale.

of Israel; and I have shown, that as this verse is verbatim the same as in Chronicles, chapter i., verse 43, where it stands consistently with the order of history, which in Genesis it does not, that the verse in Genesis, and a great part of the 36th chapter, have been taken from Chronicles, and that the book of Genesis, though it is placed first in the Bible, and ascribed to Moses, has been manufactured by some unknown person, after the book of Chronicles was written, which was not until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses.

The evidence I proceed by, to substantiate this is regular and has in it but two stages. First, as I have already stated, that the passage in Genesis refers itself for *time* to Chronicles; secondly that the book of Chronicles, to which this passage refers itself, was not *begun* to be written until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses. To prove this, we have only to look into the 13th verse of the 3rd chapter of the first book of Chronicles where the writer, in giving the genealogy of the descendants of David, mentions Zedekiah; and it was in the time of Zedekiah that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, 588 years before Christ, and consequently more than 860 years after Moses. Those who have superstitiously boasted of the antiquity of the Bible, and particularly of the books ascribed to Moses, have done it without examination, and without any authority than that of one credulous man telling it to another; for, so far from historical and chronological evidence applies, the very first book in the Bible is not so ancient as the book of Homer by more than three hundred years, and is about the same age as Æsop's Fables.

I am not contending for the morality of Homer; on the contrary, I think it a book of false glory, tending to inspire immoral and mischievous notions of honor: and with respect to Æsop, though the moral is in general just, the fable is often cruel; and the cruelty of the fable does more injury to the heart, especially in a child, than the moral does good to the judgment.

Having now dismissed Kings and Chronicles, I come to the next in course, the book of Ezra.

As one proof among others I shall produce, to show the disorder in which this pretended word of God, the Bible, has been put together, and the uncertainty of who the

authors were, we have only to look at the three first verses in Ezra, and the two last in Chronicles; for by what kind of cutting and shuffling has it been, that the three first verses in Ezra should be the two last verses in Chronicles, or that the two last in Chronicles should be the three first in Ezra? Either the authors did not know their own works, or the compilers did not know the authors.

Two last verses of Chronicles.

Verse 22. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

23. Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me: and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.

Three first verses of Ezra.

Verse 1. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2. Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth: and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God) which is in Jerusalem.

The last verse in Chronicles is broken abruptly, and ends in the middle of a phrase with the word *up*, without signifying to what place. This abrupt break, and the appearance of the same verses in different books, show as I have already said, the disorder and ignorance in which the Bible has been put together, and that the compilers of it had no authority for what they were doing, nor we any authority for believing what they have done.*

* I observed, as I passed along, several broken and senseless passages in the Bible, without thinking them of consequence enough to be introduced in the body of the work; such as that, 1 Samuel, chapter xiii., verse 1, where it is said, "Saul reigned one year: and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men," &c. The first part of the verse, that Saul reigned one year, has no sense, since it does not tell us what Saul did, nor say anything of what

The only thing that has any appearance of certainty in the book of Ezra, is the time in which it was written, which was immediately after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, about 536 years before Christ. Ezra (who according to the Jewish commentators is the same person as is called Esdras in the Apocrypha), was one of the persons who returned, and who, it is probable, wrote the account of that affair. Nehemiah, whose book follows next to Ezra, was another of the returned persons; and who, it is also probable, wrote the account of the same affair, in the book that bears his name. But those accounts are nothing to us, nor to any other persons, unless it be to the Jews, as a part of the history of their nation; and there is just as much of the word of God in those books, as there is in any

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happened at the end of that one year; and it is, besides, mere absurdity to say he reigned one year, when the very next phrase says he had reigned two, it was impossible not to have reigned one.

Another instance occurs in Joshua, chapter v., where the writer tells us a story of an angel (for such the table of contents, at the head of the chapter, calls him) appearing unto Joshua; and the story ends abruptly, and without any conclusion. The story is as follows:—Verse 13, "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jerico; that he lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Verse 14, "And he said, Nay; but as captain of the hosts of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?" Verse 15, "And the captain of the Lord's hosts said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."—And what then? nothing: for here the story ends, and the chapter too.

Either this story is broken off in the middle, or it is a story told by some Jewish humorist, in ridicule of Joshua's pretended mission from God: and the compilers of the Bible, not perceiving the design of the story, have told it as a serious matter. As a story of humor and ridicule, it has a great deal of point; for it pompously introduces an angel in the figure of a man, with a drawn sword in his hand, before whom Joshua falls on his face to the earth, and worships (which is contrary to their second commandment), and then this most important embassy from heaven ends in telling Joshua to pull off his shoe. It might as well have told him to pull up his breeches.

It is certain, however, that the Jews did not credit everything their leaders told them, as appears from the cavalier manner in which they speak of Moses, when he was gone into the mount. "As for this Moses," say they "we wot not what is become of him." Exodus, chapter xxxii., verse 1.

of the histories of France, or Rapin's history of England, or the history of any other country.

But even in matters of historical record, neither of those writers is to be depended upon. In the second chapter of Ezra, the writer gives a list of the tribes and families, and of the precise number of souls of each, that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem; and this enrolment of the persons so returned appears to have been one of the principal objects for writing the book; but in this there is an error that destroys the intention of the undertaking.

The writer begins his enrolment in the following manner:—Chapter ii., verse 3, "The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two." Verse 4, "The children of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy two." And in this manner he proceeds through all the families; and in the 64th verse, he makes a total, and says, "The whole congregation together was *forty and two thousand three hundred and three score.*

But whoever will take the trouble of casting up the several particulars, will find that the total is but 29,818; so that the error is 12,542.* What certainty can there be in the Bible for anything?

Nehemiah, in like manner, gives a list of the returned families, and of the number of each family. He begins, as in Ezra, by saying (chapter vii., verse 8), "The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two;" and so on through all the families. In the 66th verse, Nehemiah makes a total and says, as Ezra had said, "The

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* *Particulars of the families from Second chapter of Ezra.*

Chap. ii.		Bt. forwd.	12,243	Bt. forwd.	15,953	Bt. forwd.	24,153
Ver. 3	2172	Ver. 14	2056	Ver. 25	743	Ver. 36	973
„ 4	372	„ 15	454	„ 26	621	„ 37	1052
„ 5	775	„ 16	98	„ 27	122	„ 38	1247
„ 6	2812	„ 17	323	„ 28	223	„ 39	1017
„ 7	1254	„ 18	112	„ 29	52	„ 40	74
„ 8	945	„ 19	223	„ 30	165	„ 41	128
„ 9	760	„ 20	95	„ 31	1254	„ 42	139
„ 10	642	„ 21	123	„ 32	320	„ 58	392
„ 11	623	„ 22	56	„ 33	725	„ 60	652
„ 12	1222	„ 23	128	„ 34	345		
„ 13	666	„ 24	42	„ 35	3630		
	12,243		15,953		24,153	Total	27

whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore." But the particulars of this list makes a total but of 31,089, so that the error here is 11,271. These writers may do well enough for Bible-makers, but not for anything where truth and exactness are necessary. The next book in course is the book of Esther. If madam Esther thought it any honor to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus, or as a rival to Queen Vashti, who had refused to come to a drunken king, in the midst of a drunken company, to be made a show of (for the account says they had been drinking seven days, and were merry), let Esther and Mordecai look to that, it is no business of ours; at least, it is none of mine; besides which the story has a great deal the appearance of being fabulous, and is also anonymous. I pass on to the book of Job.

The book of Job differs in character from all the books we have hitherto passed over. Treachery and murder make no part of this book; it is the meditations of a mind strongly impressed with the vicissitudes of human life, and by turns sinking under and struggling against the pressure. It is a highly-wrought composition, between willing submission and involuntary discontent; and shows man, as he sometimes is, more disposed to be resigned than he is capable of being. Patience has but a small share in the character of the person of whom the book treats; on the contrary, his grief is often impetuous; but he still endeavours to keep a guard upon it, and seems determined, in the midst of accumulating ills, to impose upon himself the hard duty of contentment.

I have spoken in a respectful manner of the book of Job in the former part of the "Age of Reason," but without knowing at that time what I have learned since; which is, that from all the evidence that can be collected, the book of Job does not belong to the Bible.

I have seen the opinion of two Hebrew commentators, Abenezra and Spinoza, upon this subject; they both say that the book of Job carries no internal evidence of being a Hebrew book; that the genius of the composition, and the drama of the piece, are not Hebrew; that it has been translated from another language into Hebrew, and that the author of the book was a Gentile; that the character represented under the name of Satan (which is the first and only

time this name is mentioned in the Bible), does not correspond to any Hebrew idea, and that the two convocations which the Deity is supposed to have made of those whom the poem calls sons of God, and the familiarity which this supposed Satan is stated to have with the Deity, are in the same case.

It may also be observed, that the book shows itself to be the production of a mind cultivated in science, which the Jews, so far from being famous for, were very ignorant of. The allusions to objects of natural philosophy are frequent and strong, and are of a different cast to anything in the books known to be Hebrew. The astronomical names, Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, are Greek, and not Hebrew names; and it does not appear from anything that is to be found in the Bible, that the Jews knew anything of astronomy, or that they studied it: they had no translation of those names into their own language, but adopted the names as they found them in the poem.

That the Jews did translate the literary productions of the Gentile nations, into the Hebrew language, and mix them with their own, is not a matter of doubt; the 31st chapter of Proverbs is an evidence of this: it is there said (verse 1), "*The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.*" This verse stands as a preface to the Proverbs that follow, and which are not the proverbs of Solomon, but of Lemuel; and this Lemuel was not one of the kings of Israel, nor of Judah, but of some other country, and consequently a Gentile. The Jews however, have adopted his proverbs: and as they cannot give any account who the author of the book of Job was, nor how they came by the book; and as it differs in character from the Hebrew writings, and stands totally unconnected with every other book and chapter in the Bible before it, and after it, it has all the circumstantial evidence of being originally a book of the Gentiles.*

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* The prayer known by the name of AGUR'S PRAYER, in the 30th chapter of Proverbs, immediately preceding the proverbs of Lemuel and which is the only sensible, well-conceived, and well-expressed prayer in the Bible, has much the appearance of being a prayer taken from the Gentiles. The name of Agur occurs on no other occasion than this; and he is introduced, together with the prayer ascribed to him in the same manner, and nearly in the same words, that Lemuel and

The Bible-makers, and those regulators of time, the Bible chronologists, appear to have been at a loss where to place and how to dispose of the book of Job: for it contains no one historical circumstance, nor allusion to any, that might serve to determine its place in the Bible. But it would not have answered the purpose of these men to have informed the world of their ignorance; and therefore they have affixed it to the era of one thousand five hundred and twenty years before Christ, which is during the time the Israelites were in Egypt, and for which they have just as much authority, and no more, than I should have for saying it was a thousand years before that period. The probability, however, is, that it is older than any book in the Bible: and it is the only one that can be read without indignation or disgust.

We know nothing of what the ancient Gentile world (as it is called) was before the time of the Jews, whose practice has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nations; and it is from the Jewish accounts that we have learned to call them heathens. But as far as we know to the contrary, they were a just and a moral people, and not addicted, like the Jews, to cruelty and revenge, but of whose profession of faith we are unacquainted. It appears to have been their custom to personify both virtue and vice by statutes and images, as is done now-a-days both by statuary and by painting; but it does not follow from this, that they worshipped them any more than we do. I pass on to the book of *Psalms*, of which it is not necessary to make much observation. Some of them are moral and others are very revengeful, and the greater part relates to certain local circumstances of the Jewish nation at the time they were written, with which we have nothing to do. It is, however,

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his proverbs are introduced in the chapter that follows. The first verse of the 30th chapter says, "The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy." Here the word prophecy is used with the same application it has in the following chapter of Lemuel, unconnected with anything of prediction. The prayer of Augur is, in the 8th and 9th verses, "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal and take the name of my God in vain." This has not any of the marks of being a Jewish prayer, for the Jews never prayed but when they were in trouble, and never for anything but victory, vengeance, and riches.

an error, or an imposition, to call them the Psalms of David; they are a collection, as song-books are now-a-days, from different song writers, who lived at different times. The 137th Psalm could not have been written till more than 400 years after the time of David, because it is written in commemoration of an event, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, which did not happen till that distance of time. "*By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof; for there they required of us a song, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion.*" As a man would say to an American, or to a Frenchman, or to an Englishman, Sing us one of your American songs, or your French songs, or your English songs. This remark, with respect to the time this psalm was written, is of no other use than to show (among others already mentioned), the general imposition the world has been under with respect to the authors of the Bible. No regard has been paid to time, place, and circumstance; and the names of persons have been affixed to the several books which it was as impossible they should write, as that a man should walk in procession at his own funeral.

The Book of Proverbs. These, like the Psalms, are a collection, and that from authors belonging to other nations than those of the Jewish nation, as I have shown in the observations upon the book of Job; besides which, some of the proverbs ascribed to Solomon did not appear till two hundred and fifty years after the death of Solomon: for as is said in the 1st verse of the 25th chapter, "*These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.*" It was two hundred and fifty years from the time of Solomon to the time of Hezekiah. When a man is famous and his name is abroad, he is made the putative father of things he never said or did; and this, most probably, has been the case with Solomon. It appears to have been the fashion of that day to make proverbs, as it is now to make jest-books, and father them upon those who never saw them.

The book of *Ecclesiastes* or the *Preacher* is also ascribed to Solomon, and that with much reason, if not with truth. It is written as the solitary reflections of a worn-out debauchee, such as Solomon was, who, looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, cries out, "*All is vanity!*" A great

deal of the metaphor and of the sentiment is obscure, most probably by translation; but enough is left to show they were strongly pointed in the original.* From what is transmitted to us of the character of Solomon, he was witty, ostentatious, dissolute, and at last melancholy. He lived fast, and died, tired of the world, at the age of fifty-eight years.

Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines are worse than none; and however it may carry with it the appearance of heightened enjoyment, it defeats all the felicity of affection, by leaving it no point to fix upon; divided love is never happy. This was the case with Solomon; and if he could not, with all his pretensions to wisdom, discover it beforehand, he merited, unpitied, the mortification he afterwards endured. In this point of view, his preaching is unnecessary, because to know the consequences, it is only necessary to know the cause. Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines would have stood in the place of the whole book. It was needless after this to say, that all was vanity and vexation of spirit; for it is impossible to derive happiness from the company of those whom we deprive of happiness.

To be happy in old age, it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to objects that can accompany the mind all the way through life, and that we take the rest as good in their day. The mere man of pleasure is miserable in old age; and the mere drudge in business is but little better: whereas, natural philosophy, mathematical and mechanical science, are a continual source of tranquil pleasure; and, in spite of the gloomy dogmas of priests and of superstition, the study of those things is the study of the true theology: it teaches man to know and to admire the Creator, for the principles of science are in the creation, and are unchangeable, and of divine origin.

Those who knew Benjamin Franklin, will recollect that his mind was ever young, his temper was ever serene; science, that never grows grey, was always his mistress. He was never without an object; for when we cease to have an object, we become like an invalid in an hospital waiting for death.

* THOSE THAT LOOK OUT OF THE WINDOW SHALL BE DARKENED, is an obscure figure in translation for loss of sight.

Solomon's Songs are amorous and foolish enough, but which wrinkled fanaticism has called divine. The compilers of the Bible have placed these songs after the book of Ecclesiastes; and the chronologists have affixed to them the era of 1014 years before Christ, at which time Solomon, according to the same chronology, was nineteen years of age, and was then forming his seraglio of wives and concubines. The Bible-makers and the chronologists should have managed this matter a little better, and either have said nothing about the time, or chosen a time little less inconsistent with the supposed divinity of those songs; for Solomon was then in the honeymoon of one thousand debaucheries.

It should also have occured to them, that as he wrote, if he did write, the book of Ecclesiastes, long after these songs, and in which he exclaims, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, that he included those songs in that description. This is the more probable, because he says, or somebody for him (Ecclesiastes, chapter ii., verse 8), "*I gat me men singers and women singers* (most probably to sing those songs), *as musical instruments and that of all sorts*," and behold (verse 2), "all was vanity and vexation of spirit." The compilers, however, have done their work but by halves: for as they have given us the songs, they should have given us the tunes, that we might sing them.

The books called the books of the Prophets fill up all the remaining part of the Bible; they are sixteen in number, beginning with Isaiah, and ending with Malachi; of which I have given you a list, in the observations upon Chronicles. Of these sixteen prophets, all of whom, except the three last, lived within the time the books of Kings and Chronicles were written, two only, Isaiah and Jeremiah, are mentioned in the history of those books. I shall begin with those two, reserving what I have to say on the general character of the men called prophets to another part of the work.

Whoever will take the trouble of reading the book ascribed to Isaiah, will find it one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together: it has neither beginning, middle, nor end; and, except a short historical part, and a few sketches of history in two or three of the first chapters, is one continued incoherent, bombastical rant, full of extravagant metaphor, without application, and destitute of meaning; a school-boy would scarcely have been excused

for writing such stuff; it is (at least in translation) that kind of composition and false taste that is properly called prose run mad.

The historical part begins at the 36th chapter, that is continued to the end of the 39th chapter. It relates some matters that are said to have passed during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, at which time Isaiah lived. This fragment of history begins and ends abruptly; it has not the least connexion with the chapter that precedes it, nor with that which follows it, nor with any other in the book. It is probable that Isaiah wrote the fragment himself, because he was an actor in the circumstances it treats of; but, except this part, there are scarcely two chapters that have any connexion with each other; one is entitled, at the beginning of the first verse, "the burden of Babylon;" another, "the burden of Moab;" another, "the burden of Damascus;" another, "the burden of Egypt;" another, "the burden of the Desert of the Sea;" another, "the burden of the Valley of Vision;" as you would say, the story of the Knight of the Burning Mountain, the story of Cinderella, or the Children in the Wood, &c., &c.

I have already shown, in the instance of the two last verses of Chronicles, and the three first in Ezra, that the compilers of the Bible mixed and confounded the writings of different authors with each other; which alone, were there no other cause, is sufficient to destroy the authenticity of any compilation, because it is more than presumptive evidence that the compilers were ignorant who the authors were. A very glaring instance of this occurs in the book ascribed to Isaiah; the latter part of the 44th chapter, and the beginning of the 45th, so far from having been written by Isaiah, could only have been written by some person who lived at least a hundred and fifty years after Isaiah was dead.

These chapters are a complaint to Cyrus, who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, as is stated in Ezra. The last verse of the 44th chapter, and the beginning of the 45th, are in the following words: "*That saith of Cyrus: He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his annointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have*

holden to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee," &c.

What audacity of church and priestly ignorance it is to impose this book upon the world as the writing of Isaiah, when Isaiah, according to their own chronology, died soon after the death of Hezekiah, which was 698 years before Christ; and the decree of Cyrus, in favor of the Jews returning to Jerusalem, was, according to the same chronology, 536 years before Christ: which is a distance of time, between the two, of 162 years. I do not suppose that the compilers of the Bible made these books; but rather that they picked up some loose, anonymous essays, and put them together under the names of such authors as best suited their purpose. They have encouraged the imposition, which is next to inventing it; for it is impossible but they must have observed it.

When we see the studied craft of the Scripture-makers, in making every part of this romantic book of school-boy's eloquence bend to the monstrous idea of a Son of God begotten by a ghost on the body of a virgin, there is no imposition we are not justified in suspecting them of. Every phrase and circumstance is marked with a barbarous hand of superstitious torture, and forced into meanings it was impossible they could have. The head of every chapter, and the top of every page, are blazoned with the names of Christ and the church, that the unweary reader might suck in the error before he began to read.

"*Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son*" (Isaiah, chapter vii., verse 14), has been interpreted to mean the person called Jesus Christ, and his mother Mary, and has been echoed through Christendom for more than a thousand years; and such has been the rage of this opinion, that scarcely a spot in it but has been stained with blood, and marked with desolation in consequence of it. Though it is not my intention to enter into controversy on subjects of this kind, but to confine myself to show that the Bible is spurious; and thus, by taking away the foundation, to overthrow at once the whole structure of superstition raised thereon; I will, however, stop a moment to expose the fallacious application of this passage.

Whether Isaiah was playing a trick with Ahaz, king of

Judah, to whom the passage is spoken, is no business of mine; I mean only to show the misapplication of the passage, and that it has no more reference to Christ and his mother, than it has to me and my mother. The story is simply this:—

The king of Syria and the king of Israel (I have already mentioned that the Jews were split into two nations; one of which was called Judah, the capital of which was called Jerusalem; and the other Israel) made war jointly against Ahaz, king of Judah, and marched their armies towards Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people became alarmed, and the account says (verse 2), "*And his heart was moved and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.*"

In this situation of things, Isaiah addresses himself to Ahaz, and assures him in the name of the Lord (the cant name of all the prophets), that these two kings should not succeed against him; and to satisfy Ahaz that this should not be the case, tells him to ask a sign. This, the account says, Ahaz declined doing; giving as a reason that he would not tempt the Lord; upon which Isaiah, who is the speaker, says "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; "*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son;*" and the 16th verse says, "*For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good*, the land that thou abhorest (or dreadest, meaning Syria and the kingdom of Israel), shall be forsaken of both her kings." Here, then, was the sign, and the time limited for the completion of the assurance or promise—namely, before this child should know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

Isaiah having committed himself thus far, it became necessary to him, in order to avoid the imputation of being a false prophet, and the consequence thereof, to take measures to make this sign appear. It certainly was not a difficult thing, in any time of the world, to find a girl with child, or to make her so; and perhaps Isaiah knew of one before-hand; for I do not suppose that the prophets of that day were any more to be trusted than the priests of this; be that however as it may, he says, in the next chapter (verse 2), "And I took unto me faithful witness to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And *I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived, and bare a son.*"

Here then is the whole story, foolish as it is, of this child and this virgin; and it is upon the bare-faced perversion of this story that the book of Matthew, and the impudence and sordid interests of priests in latter times, have founded a theory which they call the gospel; and have applied this story to signify Jesus Christ; begotten they say by a ghost whom they call holy, on the body of a woman, engaged in marriage, and afterwards married, whom they call a virgin, seven hundred years after this foolish story was told; a theory which, speaking for myself, I hesitate not to disbelieve, and to say, is as fabulous and as false as God is true.*

But to show the imposition and falsehood of Isaiah, we have only to attend to the sequel of this story; which, though it is passed over in silence in the book of Isaiah, is related in the 28th chapter of the 2nd of Chronicles; and which is, that instead of these two kings failing in their attempt against Ahaz, king of Judah, as Isaiah had pretended to foretell in the name of the Lord, they succeeded; Ahaz was defeated and destroyed; a hundred and twenty thousand of his people were slaughtered; Jerusalem was plundered; and two hundred thousand women and sons and daughters carried into captivity. Thus much for this lying prophet and imposter, Isaiah, and the book of falsehoods that bears his name. I pass on to the book of

Jeremiah. This prophet, as he is called, lived in the time that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, in the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah; and the suspicion was strong against him that he was a traitor in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar. Everything relating to Jeremiah shows him to have been a man of an equivocal character: in his metaphor of the potter and the clay, chapter xviii., he guards his prognostications in such a crafty manner as always to leave himself a door to escape by, in case the event should be contrary to what he had predicted.

In the 7th and 8th verses of that chapter, he makes the Almighty to say, "at *what* instant I shall speak concerning

* In the 14th verse of the 7th chapter, it is said, that the child should be called Immanuel; but this name was not given to either of the children otherwise than as a character, which the word signifies. That of the prophetess was called Mahershalal-hash-baz, and that of Mary was called Jesus.

a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it;* if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Here was a proviso against one side of the case, now for the other side.

Verses 9 and 10, "And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." Here is a proviso against the other side; and, according to this plan of prophesying, a prophet could never be wrong, however mistaken the Almighty might be. This sort of absurd subterfuge, and this manner of speaking of the Almighty, as one would speak of a man, is consistent with nothing but the stupidity of the Bible.

As to the authenticity of the book, it is only necessary to read it, in order to decide positively that, though some passages recorded therein might have been spoken by Jeremiah, he is not the author of the book. The historical parts, if they can be called by that name, are in the most confused condition; the same events are several times repeated, and that in a manner different, and sometimes in contradiction to each other; and this disorder runs even to the last chapter, where the history, upon which the greater part of the book has been employed, begins anew, and ends abruptly. The book has all the appearance of being a medley of unconnected anecdotes, respecting persons and things of that time, collected together in the same rude manner, as if the various and contradictory accounts that are to be found in a bundle of newspapers respecting persons and things of the present day, were put together without date, order, or explanation. I will give two or three examples of this kind.

It appears from the account of the 37th chapter, that the army of Nebuchadnezzar, which is called the army of the Chaldeans, had besieged Jerusalem some time; and on their hearing that the army of Pharaoh, of Egypt, was marching against them, they raised the siege and retreated for a time. It may here be proper to mention, in order to understand this confused history, that Nebuchadnezzar had besieged and taken Jerusalem, during the reign of Jehoiakim, the predecessor of Zedekiah; and that it was Nebuchadnezzar

who had made Zedekiah king, or rather viceroy; and that this second siege, of which the book of Jeremiah treats, was in consequence of the revolt of Zedekiah against Nebuchadnezzar. This will, in some measure, account for the suspicion that affixes itself to Jeremiah, of being a traitor, and in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar, whom Jeremiah calls, in the 43rd chapter, verse 10, the servant of God.

The 11th verse of this chapter (the 37th) says, "And it came to pass that when the army of the Chaldeans was broke up from Jerusalem, for fear of Pharaoh's army, then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem, to go [as this account states], into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward *was* there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah: and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. Then said Jeremiah, *It is* false; if all not away to the Chaldeans." Jeremiah being thus stopped and accused, was, after being examined, committed to prison, on suspicion of being a traitor, where he remained, as is stated in the last verse of this chapter.

But the next chapter gives an account of the imprisonment of Jeremiah, which has no connection with this account, but ascribes his imprisonment to another circumstance, and for which we must go back to the 21st chapter. It is there stated, verse 1, that Zedekiah sent Pashur, the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to Jeremiah, to inquire of him concerning Nebuchadnezzar, whose army was then before Jerusalem; and Jeremiah said unto them, verses 8 and 9, "Thus saith the Lord, behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey."

This interview and conference breaks off abruptly at the end of the 10th verse of the 21st chapter; and such is the disorder of this book, that we have to pass over sixteen chapters, upon various subjects, in order to come at the continuation and event of this conference; and this brings us to the 1st verse of the 38th chapter, as I have just mentioned

The 38th chapter opens with saying, "Then Shaphatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelelíah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah [here are more persons mentioned than in the 21st chapter], heard the word that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, "*Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in the city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live, for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live*" (which are the words of the conference). Therefore they say to Zedekiah, "We beseech thee, let this man be put to death, for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people in speaking such words unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt;" and at the 6th verse it is said, "Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah."

These two accounts are different and contradictory. The one ascribes his imprisonment to his attempt to escape out of the city; the other to his preaching and prophesying in the city; the one to his being seized by the guard at the gate; the other to his being accused before Zedekiah by the conferees.*

* I observe two chapters, 16th and 17th, in the first book of Samuel, that contradict each other with respect to David, and the manner he became acquainted with Saul; as the 37th and 38th chapters of the book of Jeremiah contradict each other with respect to the cause of Jeremiah's imprisonment.

In the 16th chapter of Samuel, it is said, that an evil spirit of God troubled Saul, and that his servants advised him, (as a remedy) "to seek out a man who was a cunning player upon the harp." And Saul said (verse 57), Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring HIM to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son. And (verse 21), David came to Saul, and stood before him, and he loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer. And when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul (verse 23) that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well.

But the next chapter (17) gives an account, all different to this, of the manner that Saul and David became acquainted. Here it is ascribed to David's encounter with Goliath, when David was sent by his father to carry provision to his brethren in the camp. In the 55th

In the next chapter (the 39th) we have another instance of the disordered state of this book; for, notwithstanding the siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar has been the subject of several of the preceding chapters, particularly the 37th and 38th, the 39th chapter begins as if not a word had been said upon the subject, and as if the reader was to be informed of every particular respecting it; for it begins with saying, verse 1, "In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and all his army, against Jerusalem, and they besieged it," &c., &c.

But the instance in the last chapter (the 52nd) is still more glaring; for, though the story has been told over and over again this chapter still supposes the reader not to know anything of it: for it begins by saying, verse 1, "*Zedekiah was one-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hammutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libna.* (Verse 4). *And it came to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it,*" &c., &c.

It is not possible that any one man, and more particularly Jeremiah, could have been the writer of this book. The errors are such as could not have been committed by any person sitting down to compose a work. Were I, or any other man, to write in such a disordered manner, nobody would read what was written; and everybody would suppose that the writer was in a state of insanity. The only way, therefore, to account for the disorder is, that the book is a medley of detached, unauthenticated anecdotes, put together

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verse of this chapter it is said, "And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine (Goliath), he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, as thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Beth-lehemite." These two accounts belie each other, because each of them supposes Saul and David not to have known each other before. This book, the Bible, is too ridiculous even for criticism

by some stupid book-maker, under the name of Jeremiah, because many of them refer to him, and to the circumstances of the times he lived in.

Of the duplicity and of the false predictions of Jeremiah I shall mention two instances, and then proceed to review the remainder of the Bible.

It appears in the 38th chapter, that when Jeremiah was in prison, Zedekiah sent for him; and at this interview, which was private, Jeremiah pressed it strongly on Zedekiah to surrender himself to the enemy. "*If* (says he, verse 1) *thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live,*" &c. Zedekiah was apprehensive that what passed at this conference should be known: and he said to Jeremiah, verse 25, "But if the princes [meaning those of Judah] hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said to the king; hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee: then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: *and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded.*" Thus, the man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie, or very strongly prevaricate, when he suppose it would answer his purpose; for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah to make his application, neither did he make it: he went because he was sent for, and he employed that opportunity to advise Zedekiah to surrender himself to Nebuchadnezzar.

In the 34th chapter is a prophesy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah, in these words, verse 2, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak to thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go Babylon. *Yet hear the word of the Lord; O Zedekiah, king of Judah, thus saith the Lord of thee, thou shalt not die by the sword. But thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odors for thee, and they will*

lament thee, saying, Ah, Lord; for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord."

Now instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burning of odors, as at the funeral of his fathers (as Jeremiah had declared the Lord himself had pronounced), the reverse, according to the 52nd chapter, was the case: it is there said, verse 10, "And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death." What then can we say of these prophets, but that they were impostors and liars?

As for Jeremiah, he experienced none of these evils. He was taken into favor by Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him in charge to the captain of the guard, chapter xxxix., verse 12. "Take him (said he) and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." Jeremiah joined himself afterwards to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for him, against the Egyptians, who had marched to the relief of Jerusalem while it was besieged. Thus much for another of the lying prophets, and the book that bears his name.

I have been the more particular in treating of the books ascribed to Isaiah and Jeremiah, because those two are spoken of in the books of Kings and of Chronicles, which the others are not. The remainder of the books ascribed to the men called prophets I shall not trouble myself much about; but take them collectively into the observations I shall offer on the character of the men styled prophets.

In the former part of the "Age of Reason," I have said that the word prophet was the Bible word for poet, and that the flights and metaphors of the Jewish priests have been foolishly erected into what are now called prophecies. I am sufficiently justified in this opinion, not only because the books called the prophecies are written in poetical language, but because there is no word in the Bible, except it be the word prophet, that describes what we mean by a poet. I have also said that the word signified a performer upon musical instruments, of which I have given some instances; such as that of a company of prophets prophesying with psalteries,

with tabrets, with pipes, with harps, &c., and that Saul prophesied with them, 1 Samuel, chapter x., verse 5. It appears from this passage, and from other parts in the book of Samuel, that the word prophet was confined to signify poetry and music; for the person who was supposed to have a visionary insight into concealed things was not a prophet but a *seer*,* 1 Samuel, chapter ix., verse 9: and it was not till after the word *seer* went out of use (which most probably was when Saul banished those he called wizards), that the profession of the seer, or the art of seeing, became incorporated into the word prophet.

According to the *modern* meaning of the word prophet and prophesying, it signifies foretelling events to a great distance of time; and it became necessary to the inventors of the Gospel to give it this latitude of meaning, in order to apply or to stretch what they call the prophesies of the Old Testament to the times of the New. But, according to the Old Testament, the prophesying of the seer, and afterwards of the prophet, so far as the meaning of the word seer was incorporated into that of prophet, had reference only to things of the time then passing, or very closely connected with it; such as the event of a battle they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of any enterprise they were going to undertake, or of any circumstance, then pending, or of any difficulty they were then in; all of which had immediate reference to themselves (as in the case already mentioned of Ahaz and Isaiah, with respect to the expression, *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*), and not to any distant future time. It was that kind of prophesying that corresponds to what we call fortune-telling; such as casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriages, conjuring for lost goods, &c., and it is the fraud of the Christian church, not that of the Jews, and the ignorance and the superstition of modern, not that of ancient times, that elevated, those poetical—musical—conjuring—dreaming—strolling gentry, into the rank they have since had.

But besides this general character of all the prophets, they had also a particular character. They were in parties, and

* I know not what is the Hebrew word that corresponds to the word seer in English; but I observe it is translated into French by LE VOYANT, from the verb VOIR, to see; and which means the person who sees, or the seer.

they prophesied for or against, according to the party they were with; as the poetical and political writers of the present day write in defence of the party they associate with, against the other.

After the Jews were divided into two nations that of Judah, and that of Israel, each party had its prophets, who abused and accused each other of being false prophets, lying prophets, impostors, &c.

The prophets of the party of Judah, prophesied against the prophets of the party of Israel; and those of the party of Israel against those of Judah. This party-prophesying showed itself immediately on the separation, under the first two rival kings, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The prophet that cursed, or prophesied, against the altar that Jeroboam had built in Bethel, was of the party of Judah, where Rehoboam was king; and he was way-laid, on his return home, by a prophet of the party of Israel, who said unto him (1 Kings, chapter xiii., verse 14), "Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? and he said, I am." Then the prophet of the party of Israel said to him, "I am a prophet also as thou art (signifying of Judah), and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water: but (says the 18th verse), he lied unto him." This event, however, according to the story, is that the prophet of Judah never got back to Judah, for he was found dead on the road, by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel; who, no doubt, was called a true prophet by his own party, and the prophet of Judah a lying prophet.

In the third chapter of the second of Kings, a story is related of prophesying or conjuring, that shows, in several particulars, the character of a prophet. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Jehoram, king of Israel, had, for a while, ceased their party animosity, and entered into an alliance: and those two, together with the king of Edom, engaged in a war against the king of Moab. After uniting and marching their armies, the story says, they were in great distress for water; upon which Jehoshaphat said, verse 11, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha (Elisha was of the party of Judah), the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the

hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him." The story then says, that these three kings went down to Elisha: and when Elisha (who, as I have said, was a Judahmite prophet) saw the king of Israel, he said unto him, "What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay, for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab." (Meaning because of the distress they were in for water). Upon which Elisha said, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee." Here is all the venom and the vulgarity of a party prophet. We have now to see the performance or manner of prophesying.

Verse 15: "Bring me (said Elisha) a minstrel; and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him." Here is the farce of the conjurer. Now for the prophesy: "And Elisha said [singing most probably to the tune he was playing], Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches;" which was just telling them what every countryman could have told them, without either fiddle or farce, that the way to get water was to dig for it.

But as every conjurer is not famous alike for the same thing, so neither were those prophets; for though all of them, at least those I have spoken of, were famous for lying, some of them excelled in cursing. Elisha, whom I have just mentioned, was a chief in this branch of prophesying: it was he that cursed the forty-two children in the name of the Lord, whom the two she-bears came and devoured. We are to suppose that those children were of the party of Israel: but as those who will curse will lie, there is just as much credit to be given to this story of Elisha's two she-bears, as there is to that of the dragon of Wantley, of whom it is said:—

> "Poor children three devoured he,
> That could not with him grabble;
> And at one sup he ate them up,
> As a man would eat an apple."

There was another description of men called prophets,

that amused themselves with dreams and visions; but whether by night or by day we know not. These, if they were not quite harmless, were but little mischievous. Of this class are

Ezekiel and *Daniel*; and the first question upon those books, as upon all the others is, are they genuine? that is, Were they written by Ezekiel and Daniel?

Of this there is no proof; but so far as my own opinion goes, I am more inclined to believe they were, than that they were not. My reasons for this opinion are as follows: First, Because those books do not contain internal evidence to prove they were not written by Ezekiel and Daniel, as the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, &c., &c., prove they were not written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, &c.

Secondly, Because they were not written till after the Babylonish captivity began: and there is good reason to believe, that not any book in the Bible was written before that period: at least it is provable, from the books themselves, as I have already shown, they were not written till after the commencement of the Jewish monarchy.

Thirdly, Because the manner in which the books ascribed to Ezekiel and Daniel are written, agrees with the condition these men were in at the time of writing them.

Had the numerous commentators and priests who have foolishly employed or wasted their time in pretending to expound and unriddle those books, been carried into captivity, as Ezekiel and Daniel were, it would have greatly improved their intellects, in comprehending the reason for this mode of writing, and have saved them the trouble of racking their invention, as they have done, to no purpose; for they would have found that themselves would be obliged to write whatever they had to write, respecting their own affairs, or those of their friends, or of their country, in a concealed manner, as those men have done.

These two books differ from all the rest; for it is only these that are filled with accounts of dreams and visions; and this difference arose from the situation the writers were in, as prisoners of war, or prisoners of state, in a foreign country, which obliged them to convey even the most trifling information to each other, and all their political projects or opinions, in obscure and metaphorical terms. They pretend to have dreamed dreams, and seen visions, because it was

unsafe for them to speak facts or plain language. We ought, however, to suppose that the persons to whom they wrote understood what they meant, and that it was not intended anybody else should. But these busy commentators and priests have been puzzling their wits to find out what it was not intended they should know, and with which they have nothing to do.

Ezekiel and Daniel were carried prisoners to Babylon, under the first captivity, in the time of Jehoiakim, nine years before the second captivity, in the time of Zedekiah. The Jews were then still numerous, and had considerable force at Jerusalem, and as it is natural to suppose that men, in the situation of Ezekiel and Daniel, would be meditating the recovery of their country, and their own deliverance, it is reasonable to suppose that the accounts of dreams and visions, with which these books are filled, are no other than a disguised mode of correspondence, to facilitate those objects; it served them as a cypher, or secret alphabet. If they are not this, they are tales, reveries, and nonsense; or, at least, a fanciful way of wearing off the wearisomeness of captivity; but the presumption is, they were the former.

Ezekiel begins his books by speaking of a vision of *cherubims*, and a vision of a *wheel within a wheel*, which he says he saw by the river Chebar, in the land of his captivity. Is it not reasonable to suppose that by the cherubims he meant the temple at Jerusalem, where they had the figures of cherubims? and by a wheel within a wheel (which as a figure has always been understood to signify political contrivance) the project or means of recovering Jerusalem? In the latter part of this book he supposes himself transported to Jerusalem, and into the temple; and he refers back to the vision on the river Chebar, and says (chapter xliii., verse 3) that this last vision was like the vision on the river Chebar, which indicates that those pretended dreams and visions had for their object the recovery of Jerusalem, and nothing further.

As to the romantic interpretations and applications, wild as the dreams and visions they undertake to explain, which commentators and priests have made of those books, that of converting them into things which they call prophecies, and making them bend to times and circumstances as far

remote even s the present day, it shows the fraud or the extreme folly to which credulity or priestcraft can go.

Scarcely anything can be more absurd than to suppose that men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, whose country was overrun, and in the possession of the enemy, all their friends and relations in captivity abroad, or in slavery at home, or massacred, or in continual danger of it—scarcely anything, I say, can be more absurd, than to suppose that such men should find nothing to do but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations a thousand or two thousand years after they were dead; at the same time nothing is more natural than that they should meditate the recovery of Jerusalem and their own deliverance; and that this was the sole object of all the obscure and apparently frantic writings contained in those books.

In this sense, the mode of writing used in those two books being forced by necessity, and not adopted by choice, is not irrational: but if we are to use the books as prophesies, they are false. In the 29th chapter of Ezekiel, speaking of Egypt, is said, verse 11, "*No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it; neither shall it be inhabited forty years.*" This is what never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are. I here close this part of the subject.

In the former part of the "Age of Reason," I have spoken of Jonah, and of the story of him and the whale. A fit story for ridicule, if it was written to be believed; or of laughter, if it was intended to try what credulity would swallow; for if it could swallow Jonah and the whale, it could swallow anything.

But, as is already shown in the observations on the book of Job and the Proverbs, it is not always certain which of the books in the Bible are originally Hebrew, or only translations from the books of the Gentiles into Hebrew; and as the book of Jonah, so far from treating of the affairs of the Jews, says nothing upon that subject, but treats altogether of the Gentiles, it is more probable that it is a book of the Gentiles than of the Jews: and that it has been written as a fable to expose the nonsense and satirise the vicious and malignant character of a Bible prophet or a predicting priest.

Jonah is represented first, as a disobedient prophet, running away from his mission, and taking shelter aboard a vessel of the Gentiles, bound from Joppa to Tarshish; as if he ignorantly supposed, by such a paltry contrivance, he could hide himself where God could not find him. The vessel is overtaken by a storm at sea; and the mariners, all of whom are Gentiles, believing it to be a judgment, on account of some one on board who had committed a crime, agreed to cast lots to discover the offender; and the lot fell upon Jonah. But, before this, they had cast all their wares and merchandise overboard, to lighten the vessel, while Jonah, like a stupid fellow, was fast asleep in the hold.

After the lot had designated Jonah to be the offender, they questioned him to know who and what he was; and he told them *he was a Hebrew;* and the story implies that he confessed himself to be guilty. But these Gentiles, instead of sacrificing him at once, without pity or mercy, as a company of Bible prophets or priests would have done by a Gentile in the same case, and as it is related Samuel had done by Agag, and Moses by the women and children, they endeavored to save him, though at the risk of their own lives; for the account says, Jonah, chapter i., verse 13, "*Nevertheless* [that is, though Jonah was a Jew and a foreigner, and the cause of all their misfortunes, and the loss of their cargo], *the men rowed hard to bring it* (the boat) *to land, but they could not, for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them.*" Still, however, they were unwilling to put the fate of the lot into execution; and they cried (says the account) unto the Lord, saying, verse 14, "*We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord hast done as it pleased thee.*" Meaning thereby, that they did not presume to judge Jonah guilty, since he might be innocent; but that they considered the lot that had fallen upon him as a decree of God, or as it *pleased* God. The address of this prayer shows that the Gentiles worshipped *one Supreme Being*, and that they were not idolators, as the Jews represented them to be. But the storm still continuing, and the danger increasing, they put the fate of the lot into execution, and cast Jonah into the sea; where, according to the story, a great fish swallowed him up whole and alive.

We have now to consider Jonah securely housed from the storm in the fish's belly. Here we are told that he prayed; but the prayer is a made-up prayer, taken from various parts of the Psalms, without any connexion or consistency, and adapted to the distress, but not at all to the condition that Jonah was in. It is such a prayer as a Gentile who might know something of the Psalms, could copy out for him. This circumstance alone, were there no other, is sufficient to indicate that the whole is a made-up story. The prayer, however, is supposed to have answered the purpose, and the story goes on (taking up at the same time the cant language of a Bible prophet), saying, Jonah, chapter ii., verse 10, "*And the Lord spake unto the fish*, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land*."

Jonah then received a second mission to Nineveh, with which he sets out; and we have now to consider him as a preacher. The distress he is represented to have suffered, the remembrance of his own disobedience as the cause of it, and the miraculous escape he is supposed to have had, were sufficient, one would conceive, to have impressed him with sympathy and benevolence in the execution of his mission; but, instead of this, he enters the city with denunciation and malediction in his mouth, crying, Jonah, chapter iii., verse 4, "*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*"

We have now to consider the supposed missionary in the last act of his mission; and here it is that the malevolent spirit of a Bible prophet, or of a predicting priest, appears in all that blackness of character that men ascribe to the being they call the devil.

Having published his predictions he withdrew, says the story, to the east side of the city. But for what? not to contemplate in retirement the mercy of his Creator to himself, or to others, but to wait with malignant impatience the destruction of Nineveh. It came to pass, however, as the story relates, that the Ninevites reformed, and that God, according to the Bible phrase, repented him of the evil he had said he would do unto them, and did it not. This, saith the verse of the last chapter, *displeased* Jonah *exceedingly, and he was very angry.* His obdurate heart would rather that Nineveh should be destroyed, and every soul, young and old, perish in its ruins, than that his predictions should not be fulfilled. To expose the character of a prophet still

more, a gourd is made to grow up in the night, that promiseth him an agreeable shelter from the heat of the sun in the place to which he is retired; and the next morning it dies.

Here the rage of the prophet becomes excessive, and he is ready to destroy himself. Jonah, chap iv., verse 8, "*It is better* (said he) *for me to die than to live.*" This brings on a supposed expostulation between the Almighty and the prophet: in which the former says, verses 9, 10, 11, "*Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death. Then, said the Lord, thou had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?*"

Here is both the winding up of the satire and the moral of the fable. As a satire it strikes against the character of all the Bible-prophets, and against all the indiscriminate judgments upon men, women, and children, with which this lying book, the Bible, is crowded; such as Noah's flood, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the extirpation of the Canaanites, even to sucking infants, and women with child, because the same reflection, *that there are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand*, meaning young children, applies to all their cases. It satirises also the supposed partiality of the Creator for one nation more than for another.

As a moral, it preaches against the malevolent spirit of prediction; for as certainly as a man predicts ill, he becomes inclined to wish it. The pride of having his judgment right hardens his heart, till at last he beholds with satisfaction, or sees with disappointment, the accomplishment or the failure of his predictions. This book ends with the same kind of strong and well-directed point against prophets, prophecies, and indiscriminate judgments, as the chapter that Benjamin Franklin made for the Bible, about Abraham and the Stranger ends against the intolerant spirit of religious persecution. Thus much for the book of Jonah.

Of the poetical parts of the Bible, that are called prophecies, I have spoken in the former part of the "Age of

Reason;" and already in this, where I have said that the word *prophet* is the Bible word for *poet;* and that the flights and metaphors of those poets, many of which are become obscure by the lapse of time and the change of circumstances, have been ridiculously erected into things called prophecies, and applied to purposes the writers never thought of. When a priest quotes any of those passages he unriddles it agreeably to his own views, and imposes that explanation upon his congregation as the meaning of the writer. The whore of Babylon has been the common whore of all the priests, and each has accused the other of keeping the strumpet; so well do they agree in their explanations.

There now remain only a few books, which they call the books of the lesser prophets; and as I have already shown that the greater are imposters, it would be cowardice to disturb the repose of the little ones. Let them sleep, then, in the arms of their nurses, the priests, and both be forgotten together.

I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees Here they lie; and the priests, if they can, may re-plant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground but they will never make them grow. I pass on to the books of the New Testament

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THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The New Testament, they tell us, is founded upon the prophecies of the old; if so, it must follow the fate of its foundation.

As it is nothing extraordinary that a woman should be with child before she was married, and that the son she might bring forth should be executed, even unjustly: I see no reason for not believing that such a woman as Mary, and such a man as Joseph, and Jesus existed: their mere existence is a matter of indifference, about which there is no ground, either to believe or to disbelieve, and which comes under the common head of, *It may be so, and what then?* The probability, however, is, that there were such persons, or at least such as resembled them in part of the circumstances

because almost all romantic stories have been suggested by by some actual circumstances as the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, not a word of which is true, were suggested by the case of Alexander Selkirk.

It is not then the existence, or non-existence, of the person that I trouble myself about; it is the fable of Jesus Christ as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon, against which I contend. The story taken as it is told, is blasphemously obscene. It gives an account of a young woman engaged to be married, and while under this engagement, she is, to speak plain language, debauched by a ghost, under the impious pretence (Luke, chapter i., verse 35), that "*the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.*" Notwithstanding which, Joseph afterwards marries her, cohabits with her as his wife, and in his turn rivals the ghost. This is putting the story into intelligible language, and when told in this manner, there is not a priest but must be ashamed to own it.*

Obscenity in matters of faith, however wrapped up, is always a token of fable and imposture; for it is necessary to our serious belief in God, that we do not connect it with stories that run, as this does, into ludicrous interpretations. This story is, upon the face of it, the same kind of story as that of Jupiter and Leda, or Jupiter and Europa, or any other of the amorous adventures of Jupiter; and shows, as is already stated in the former part of the "Age of Reason," that the Christian faith is built upon the heathen mythology.

As the historical parts of the New Testament, so far as concerns Jesus Christ, are confined to a very short space of time, less than two years, and all within the same country, and nearly to the same spot, the discordance of time, place, and circumstance, which detects the fallacy of the books of the Old Testament, and proves them to be impositions, cannot be expected to be found here in the same abundance. The New Testament compared with the Old, is like a farce of one act, in which there is not room for very numerous violations of the unities. There are, however, some glaring

* Mary, the supposed virgin-mother of Jesus, had several other children, sons and daughters. See Matthew, chapter xiii., verses 55, 56.

contradictions which, exclusive of the fallacy of the pretended prophecies, are sufficient to show the story of Jesus Christ to be false.

I lay it down as a position which cannot be controverted —first, that the *agreement* of all the parts of a story does not prove that story to be true, because the parts may agree and the whole may be false; secondly, that the *disagreement* of the parts of a story proves *the whole cannot be true.* The agreement does not prove the truth, but the disagreement proves falsehood positively.

The history of Jesus Christ is contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The first chapter of Matthew begins with giving a genealogy of Jesus Christ; and in the third chapter of Luke there is also given a genealogy of Jesus Christ. Did these two agree it would not prove the genealogy to be true, because it might, nevertheless, be a fabrication; but as they contradict each other in every particular, it proves falsehood absolutely. If Matthew speaks truth, Luke speaks falsehood; and if Luke speaks truth, Matthew speaks falsehood; and as there is no authority for believing one more than the other, there is no authority for believing either; and if they cannot be believed even in the very first thing they say and set out to prove, they are not entitled to be believed in anything they say afterwards. Truth is an uniform thing; and as to inspiration and revelation, were we to admit it, it is impossible to suppose it can be contradictory. Either then the men called apostles were impostors, or the books ascribed to them have been written by other persons, and fathered upon them, as is the case of the Old Testament.

The book of Matthew gives (chapter i., verse 6) a genealogy by name from David, up through Joseph, the husband of Mary, to Christ, and makes there to be *twenty-eight* generations. The book of Luke gives also a genealogy by name from Christ, through Joseph, the husband of Mary, down to David, and makes them to be *forty-three* generations; besides which there are only the two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists. I here insert both genealogical lists, and for the sake of perspicuity and comparison have placed them both in the same direction— that is, from Joseph down to David.

Genealogy according to Matthew.

	Christ	23 Josaphat
2	Joseph	24 Asa
3	Jacob	25 Abia
4	Matthan	26 Roboam
5	Eleazar	27 Solomon
6	Eluid	28 David*
7	Achim	
8	Sadoc	
9	Azor	
10	Eliakim	
11	Abiud	
12	Zorobabel	
13	Salathiel	
14	Jeconias	
15	Josias	
16	Amon	
17	Manasses	
18	Ezekias	
19	Achaz	
20	Joatham	
21	Ozias	
22	Joram	

Genealogy according to Luke.

	Christ	23 Neri
2	Joseph	24 Melchi
3	Heli	25 Addi
4	Matthat	26 Cosam
5	Levi	27 Elmodam
6	Melchi	28 Er
7	Janna	29 Jose
8	Joseph	30 Eliezer
9	Mattathias	31 Joram
10	Amos	32 Matthat
11	Naum	33 Levi
12	Esli	34 Simeon
13	Nagge	35 Juda
14	Maath	36 Joseph
15	Mattathias	37 Jonan
16	Semei	38 Eliakim
17	Joseph	39 Melea
18	Juda	40 Menan
19	Joanna	41 Mattatha
20	Rhesa	42 Nathan
21	Zorobabel	43 David
22	Salathiel	

Now if these men, Matthew and Luke, set out with a falsehood between them—as these two accounts show they do—in the very commencement of their history of Jesus Christ, and of who, and of what he was, what authority (as I have before asked) is there left for believing the strange things they tell us afterwards? If they cannot be believed in their account of his natural genealogy, how are we to believe them when they tell us he was the Son of God, begotten by a ghost; and that an angel announced this in secret to his mother? If they lied in one genealogy,

* From the birth of David to the birth of Christ is upwards of 1080 years; and as the lifetime of Christ is not included, there are but 27 full generations. To find therefore the average age of each person mentioned in the list, at the time his first son was born, it is only necessary to divide 1080 by 27, which gives 40 years for each person. As the lifetime of man was then but of the same extent it is now, it is an absurdity to suppose that 27 following generations should all be old bachelors before they married; and the more so when we are told that Solomon, the next in succession to David, had a house full of wives and mistresses before he was twenty-one years of age. So far from this genealogy being a solemn truth, it is not even a reasonable lie. The list of Luke gives about twenty-six years for the average age, and this is too much.

why are we to believe them in the other? If his natural genealogy be manufactured (which it certainly is) why are we not to suppose that his celestial genealogy is manufactured also, and that the whole is fabulous? Can any man of serious reflection hazard his future happiness upon the belief of a story naturally impossible: repugnant to every idea of decency; and related by persons already detected of falsehood? Is it not more safe that we stop ourselves at the plain, pure, and unmixed belief of one God, which is Deism, than that we commit ourselves on an ocean of improbable, irrational, indecent, and contradictory tales.

The first question, however, upon the books of the New Testament, as upon those of the old, is, Are they genuine? were they written by the persons to whom they are ascribed? for it is upon this ground only that the strange things related therein have been credited. Upon this point there is no *direct proof for or against;* and all that this state of a case proves is *doubtfulness;* and doubtfulness is the opposite of belief. The state, therefore, that the books are in, proves against themselves as far as this kind of proof can go.

But exclusive of this, the presumption is that the books called the Evangelists, and ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and that they are impositions. The disordered state of the history in these four books, the silence of one book upon matters related in the other, and the disagreement that is to be found among them, implies, that they are the production of some unconnected individuals, many years after the things they pretend to relate, each of whom made his own legend; and not the writings of men living intimately together, as the men called apostles are supposed to have done; in fine, that they have been manufactured, as the books of the Old Testament have been by other persons than those whose names they bear.

The story of the angel announcing what the Church calls the *immaculate conception*, is not so much as mentioned in the books ascribed to Mark and John; and is differently related in Matthew and Luke. The former says the angel appeared to Joseph, the latter says it was to Mary; but either Joseph or Mary was the worst evidence that could have been thought of, for it was others that should have

testified *for them*, and not they for themselves. Were any girl that is now with child to say, and even to swear it, that she was gotten with child by a ghost, and that an angel told her so, would she be believed? Certainly she would not. Why, then, are we to believe the same thing of another girl whom we never saw, told by nobody knows who, nor when, nor where? How strange and inconsistent it is, that the same circumstance that would weaken the belief even of a probable story, should be given as a motive for believing this one, that has upon the face of it every token of absolute impossibility and imposture?

The story of Herod destroying all the children under two years belongs altogether to the book of Matthew; not one of the rest mentions anything about it. Had such a circumstance been true, the universality of it must have made it known to all the writers, and the thing would have been too striking to have been omitted by any. This writer tells us that Jesus escaped this slaughter, because Joseph and Mary were warned by an angel to flee with him unto Egypt; but he forgot to make any provision for John, who was then under two years of age. John, however, who stayed behind, fared as well as Jesus who fled—and therefore the story circumstantially belies itself.

Not any two of these writers agree in reciting, *exactly in the same words*, the written inscription, short as it is, which they tell us was put over Christ when he was crucified; and, besides this, Mark says he was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning), and John says it was the sixth hour (twelve at noon).*

The inscription is thus stated in these books—

Matthew..... This is Jesus the king of the Jews.
Mark ..... The king of the Jews.
Luke ..... This is the king of the Jews.
John ..... Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews.

We may infer from these circumstances, trivial as they are, that those writers, whoever they were, and in whatever time they lived, were not present at the scene. The only

* According to John, the sentence was not passed till about the sixth hour (noon), and consequently, the execution could not be till the afternoon; but Mark says expressly that he was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning) chapter xv., verse 25; John, chapter xix., verse 14.

one of the men called apostles who appears to have been near the spot was Peter, and when he was accused of being one of Jesus's followers, it is said (Matthew, chapter xxvi., verse 74): 'Then Peter began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man;' yet we are now called upon to believe the same Peter, convicted (by their own account) of perjury. For what reason or on what authority shall we do this?

The accounts that are given of the circumstances that they tell us attended the crucifixion, are differently related in those four books.

The book ascribed to Matthew says (chapter xxvii., verse 45): "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour." Verses 51, 52, 53: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Such is the account which this dashing writer of the book of Matthew gives, but in which he is not supported by the writers of the other books.

The writer of the book ascribed to Mark, in detailing the circumstances of the crucifixion, makes no mention of any earthquake, nor of the rocks rending, nor of the graves opening, nor of the dead men walking out. The writer of the book of Luke is silent also upon the same points. And as to the writer of the book of John, though he details all the circumstance of the crucifixion down to the burial of Christ, he says nothing about either the darkness—the veil of the temple—the earthquake—the rocks—the graves—nor the dead men.

Now, if it had been true, that those things had happened, and if the writers of these books had lived at the time they did happen, and had been the persons they are said to be—namely, the four men called apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, it was not possible for them, as true historians, even without the aid of inspiration, not to have recorded them. The things, supposing them to have been facts, were of too much notoriety not to have been known, and of too much importance not to have been told. All these supposed apostles must have been witnesses of the earthquake, if there had been any; for it was not possible

for them to have been absent from it; the opening of the graves, and the resurrection of the dead men, and their walking about the city, is of greater importance than the earthquake. An earthquake is always possible, and natural, and proves nothing; but this opening of the graves is supernatural, and directly in point to their doctrine, their cause, and their apostleship. Had it been true, it would have filled up whole chapters of those books, and been the chosen theme and general chorus of all the writers; but instead of this, little and trivial things, and mere prattling conversations of *He said this, and he said that*, are often tediously detailed, while this most important of all, had it been true, is passed off in a slovenly manner by a single dash of the pen, and that by one writer only, and not so much as hinted at by the rest.

It is an easy thing to tell a lie, but it is difficult to support the lie after it is told. The writer of the book of Matthew should have told us who the saints were that came to life again, and went into the city, and what became of them afterwards, and who it was that saw them; for he is not hardy enough to say that he saw them himself;—whether they came out naked, and all in natural buff, he-saints and she-saints; or whether they came full dressed, and where they got their dresses; whether they went to their former habitations and re-claimed their wives, their husbands, and their property, and how they were received; whether they entered ejectments for the recovery of their possessions, or brought actions of *crim. con.* against the rival interlopers; whether they remained on earth, and followed their former occupation of preaching or working; or whether they died again, or went back to their graves alive and buried themselves.

Strange, indeed, that an army of saints should return to life, and nobody know who they were, nor who it was that saw them, and that not a word should be said upon the subject, nor these saints have anything to tell us! Had it been the prophets who (as we are told) had formerly prophesied of these things, *they* must have had a *great deal* to say. They could have told us everything, and we should have had posthumous prophecies with notes and commentaries upon the first, a little better at least than we have now. Had it been Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua, and Samuel, and David,

nót an unconverted Jew had remained in all Jerusalem. Had it been John the Baptist, and the saints of the time then present, everybody would have known them, and they would have out-preached and out-famed all the other apostles. But instead of this, these saints are made to pop up, like Jonah's gourd, in the night; for no purpose at all but to wither in the morning. Thus much for this part of the story.

The tale of the resurrection follows that of the crucifixion; and in this as well as in that, the writers, whoever they were, disagree so much, as to make it evident that none of them were there.

The book of Matthew states, that when Christ was put in the sepulchre, the Jews applied to Pilate for a watch or a guard to be placed over the sepulchre to prevent the body being stolen by the disciples; and that in consequence of this request, the sepulchre *was made sure sealing the stone* that covered the mouth and setting a watch. But the other books say nothing about this application, nor about the sealing, nor the guard, nor the watch, and according to their accounts there were none. Matthew, however, follows up this part of the story of the guard or the watch with a second part, that I shall notice in conclusion, as it serves to detect the fallacy of these books.

The book of Matthew continues its account, and says (chapter xxviii., verse 1) that at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to *dawn* toward the first day of the week, came *Mary Magdalene* and the *other Mary*, to see the sepulchre. Mark says it was sun-rising, and John says it was dark. Luke says it was Mary Magdalene, and Joana and *Mary the mother* of James, and *other women* that came to the sepulchre; and John states, that Mary Magdalene came alone. So well do they agree about their first evidence. They all, however, appear to have known most about Mary Magdalene; she was a woman of a large acquaintance, and was not an ill conjecture that she might be upon the stroll.

The book of Matthew goes on to say (verse 2), "And behold! there was a great earthquake, for the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door *and sat upon it.*" But the other books say nothing about any earthquake, nor about the angel rolling back the stone, *and sitting upon it;* and, according to

their accounts, there was no angel sitting there. Mark says, the angel was *within the sepulchre sitting* on the right side. Luke says there were two, and they were both standing up; and John says they were both sitting down, one at the head and the other at the feet.

Matthew says, that the angel that was sitting upon the stone on the outside of the sepulchre told the two Marys that Christ was risen, and that the women went *away* quickly. Mark says, that the women, upon seeing the stone rolled away, and wondering at it, went into the sepulchre, and that it was the angel that was *sitting* within on the right side that told them so. Luke says, it was the two angels that were standing up: and John says, it was Jesus Christ himself that told it to Mary Magdalene, and that she did not go into the sepulchre, but only stooped down and looked in.

Now if the writers of those four books had gone into a court of justice to prove an *alibi* (for it is of the nature of an *alibi* that is here attempted to be proved—namely, the absence of a dead body, by supernatural means), and had they given their evidence in the same contradictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropt for perjury, and would justly have deserved it. Yet this is the evidence, and these are the books that have been imposed upon the world, as being given by divine inspiration, and as the unchangeable word of God.

The writer of the book of Matthew, after giving this account, relates a story that is not to be found in any of the other books, and which is the same I have just before alluded to.

"Now, says he (that is, after the conversation the women had with the angel sitting upon the stone), behold some of the watch (meaning the watch that he had said had been placed over the sepulchre) came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done; and when they were assembled with the elders and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we *slept;* and if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying (that his

disciples stole him away) is commonly reported among the Jews *until this day.*"

The expression, *until this day*, is an evidence that the book ascribed to Matthew was not written by Matthew, and that it has been manufactured long after the times and things of which it pretends to treat; for the expression implies a great length of intervening time. It would be inconsistent in us to speak in this manner of anything happening in our own time. To give, therefore, intelligible meaning to the expression, we must suppose a lapse of some generations at least, for this manner of speaking carries the mind back to ancient time.

The absurdity also of the story is worth noticing; for it shows the writer of the book of Matthew to have been an exceedingly weak and foolish man. He tells a story, that contradicts itself in point of possibility; for though the guard, if there were any, might be made to say that the body was taken away while they were asleep, and to give that as a reason for not having prevented it, that same sleep must also have prevented their knowing how and by whom it was done; and yet they are made to say, that it was the disciples who did it. Were a man to tender his evidence of something that he should say was done, and of the manner of doing it, and of the person who did it, while he was asleep, and could know nothing of the matter, such evidence could not be received. It will do well enough for Testament evidence, but not for anything where truth is concerned.

I come now to that part of the evidence in those books, that respects the pretended appearance of Christ after this pretended resurrection.

The writer of the book of Matthew relates, that the Angel that was sitting on the stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, said to the two Marys, chapter xxviii., verse 7, "Behold Christ is gone before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you." And the same writer, at the two next verses (8, 9), makes Christ himself to speak to the same purpose to these women immediately after the angel had told it to them, and that they ran quickly to tell it to the disciples: and at the 16th verse it is said, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them: and when they saw him they worshipped him."

But the writer of the book of John tells us a story very different to this; for he says, chapter xx., verse 19, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week (that is, the same day that Christ is said to have arisen), when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst of them."

According to Matthew, the eleven were marching to Galilee, to meet Jesus, in a mountain, by his own appointment, at the very time when according to John, they were assembled in another place, and that not by appointment, but in secret, for fear of the Jews.

The writer of the book of Luke contradicts that of Matthew more pointedly than John does; for he says expressly, that the meeting was in *Jerusalem* the evening of the same day that he (Christ) arose, and that the eleven were there. See Luke, chapter xxiv., verses 13, 33.

Now it is not possible, unless we admit these supposed disciples the right of wilful lying, that the writer of these books could be any of the eleven persons called disciples; for if, according to Matthew, the eleven went into Galilee to meet Jesus in a mountain by his own appointment, on the same day that he is said to have risen, Luke and John must have been two of that eleven; yet the writer of Luke says expressly, and John implies as much, that the meeting was that same day, in a house in Jerusalem: and on the other hand, if, according to Luke and John, the eleven were assembled in a house in Jerusalem, Matthew must have been one of that eleven; yet Matthew says, the meeting was in a mountain in Galilee, and consequently the evidence given in those books destroys each other.

The writer of the book of Mark says nothing about any meeting in Galilee: but he says, chapter xvi., verse 12, that Christ, after his resurrection, appeared in another form to two of them, as they walked into the country, and that these two told it to the residue, who would not believe them. Luke also tells a story, in which he keeps Christ employed the whole of the day of this pretended resurrection, until the evening, and which totally invalidates the account of going to the mountain in Galilee. He says that two of them, without saying which two, went that same day to a village called Emmaus, three score furlongs (seven miles

and a half) from Jerusalem, and that Christ, in disguise, went with them, and stayed with them unto the evening, and supped with them, and then vanished out of their sight, and reappeared that same evening at the meeting of the eleven in Jerusalem.

This is the contradictory manner in which the evidence of this pretended reappearance of Christ is stated; the only point in which the writers agree is the skulking privacy of that reappearance; for whether it was in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, it was still skulking. To what cause, then, are we to assign this skulking? On the one hand, it is directly repugnant to the supposed or pretended end, that of convincing the world that Christ was risen: and on the other hand, to have asserted the publicity of it, would have exposed the writers of those books to public detection, and therefore they have been under the necessity of making it a private affair.

As to the account of Christ being seen by more than five hundred at once, it is Paul only who says it, and not the five hundred who say it for themselves. It is, therefore, the testimony of but one man, and that, too, of a man who did not, according to the same account, believe a word of the matter himself, at the time it is said to have happened. His evidence, supposing him to have been the writer of the 15th chapter of Corinthians, where this account is given, is like that of a man who comes into a court of justice to swear that what he had sworn before is false. A man may often see reason, and he has, too, always the right of changing his opinion: but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.

I now come to the last scene, that of the ascension into heaven. Here all fear of the Jews and of everything else must necessarily have been out of the question: it was that which, if true, was to seal the whole; and upon which the reality of the future mission of the disciples was to rest for proof. Words, whether declarations or promises, that passed in private, either in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, even supposing them to have been spoken, could not be evidence in public: it was, therefore, necessary that this last scene should preclude the possibility of denial and dispute: and that it should be, as I have stated in the former part of the "Age

of Reason," as public and as visible as the sun at noon-day; at least, it ought to have been as public as the crucifixion is reported to have been. But to come to the point.

In the first place, the writer of the book of Matthew does not say a syllable about it; neither does the writer of the book of John. This being the case, is it possible to suppose that those writers, who affect to be even minute in other matters would have been silent upon this had it been true? The writer of the book of Mark passes it off in a careless, slovenly manner, with a single dash of the pen, as if he was tired of romancing or ashamed of the story. So also does the writer of Luke. And even between these two there is not an apparent agreement as to the place where his final parting is said to have been.

The book of Mark says that Christ appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat—alluding to the meeting of the eleven at Jerusalem: he then states the conversation, that he says passed at that meeting, and immediately after says, chapter xvi., verses 14, 19 (as a school-boy would finish a dull story), "So *then*, after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." But the writer of Luke says, chapter xxiv., verse 50, that the ascension was from Bethany: that *he* (Christ) *led them out as far as to Bethany, and was parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.* So also was Mahomet: and as to Moses, the apostle Jude says, verse 9, *that Michael and the devil disputed about his body.* While we believe such fables as these, or either of them, we believe unworthily of the Almighty.

I have now gone through the examination of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and when it is considered that the whole space of time, from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension, is but a few days, apparently not more than three or four, and that all the circumstances are reported to have happened nearly about the same spot, Jerusalem; it is, I believe, impossible to find in any story upon record, so many and such glaring absurdities, contradictions and falsehoods, as are in those books. They are more numerous and striking than I had any expectation of finding when I began this examination, and far more so than I had any idea of when I wrote the former part of the "Age of Reason." I had then neither Bible

nor Testament to refer to, nor could I procure any. My own situation, even as to existence, was becoming every day more precarious; and as I was willing to leave something behind me upon the subject, I was obliged to be quick and concise The quotations I then made were from memory only, but they are correct; and the opinions I have advanced in that work are the effect of the most clear and long-established conviction—that the Bible and the Testament are impositions upon the world—that the fall of man —the account of Jesus Christ being the Son of God, and of his dying to appease the wrath of God and of salvation, by that strange means, are all fabulous inventions, dishonorable to the wisdom and power of the Almighty—that the only true religion is Deism, by which I then meant, and now mean, the belief of one God, and an imitation of his moral character, or the practice of what are called moral virtues—and that it was upon this only (so far as religion is concerned) that I rested all my hopes of happiness hereafter. So say I now—and so help me God.

But to return to the subject. Though it is impossible, at this distance of time, to ascertain as a fact who were the writers of these four books (and this alone is sufficient to hold them in doubt, and where we doubt we do not believe), it is not difficult to ascertain negatively that they were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed. The contradictions in those books demonstrate two things.

First, that the writers cannot have been eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the matters they relate, or they would have related them without those contradictions; and, consequently, that the books have not been written by the persons called apostles, who are supposed to have been witnesses of this kind.

Secondly, that the writers, whoever they were, have not acted in concerted imposition: but each writer, separately and individually for himself, and without the knowledge of the other.

The same evidence that applies to prove the one, applies equally to prove both cases; that is, that the books were not written by the men called apostles, and also that they are not a concerted imposition. As to inspiration, it is altogether out of the question; we may as well attempt to unite truth and falsehood, as inspiration and contradiction.

If four men are eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses to a scene, they will, without any concert between them, agree as to the time and place when and where the scene happened. Their individual knowledge of the thing, each knowing it for himself, renders concert totally unnecessary: the one will not say it was in a mountain in the country, and the other at a house in town: the one will not say it was at sunrise, and the other that it was dark. For in whatever place it was, at whatever time it was, they knew it equally alike.

And on the other hand, if four men concert a story, they will make their separate relations of that story agree and corroborate with each other to support the whole. The concert supplies the want of fact in the one case, as the knowledge of the fact supersedes, in the other case, the necessity of a concert. The same contradictions, therefore, that prove there has been no concert, prove also that the reporters had no knowledge of the fact (or rather of that which they relate as a fact), and detect also the falsehood of their reports. Those books, therefore, have neither been written by the men called apostles, nor by impostors in concert. How, then, have they been written?

I am not one of those who are fond of believing there is much of that which is called wilful lying, or lying originally; except in the case of men setting up to be prophets, as in the Old Testament, for prophesying is lying professionally. In almost all other cases; it is not difficult to discover the progress by which even simple supposition, with the aid of credulity, will, in time grow into a lie, and at last be told as a fact: and whenever we can find a charitable reason for a thing of this kind, we ought not to indulge a severe one.

The story of Jesus Christ appearing after he was dead, is the story of an apparition; such as timid imaginations can always create in vision, and credulity believe Stories of this kind had been told of the assassination of Julius Cæsar, not many years before, and they generally have their origin in violent deaths, or in the execution of innocent persons. In cases of this kind compassion lends its aid, and benevolently stretches the story. It goes on a little and a little farther, till it becomes a *most certain truth.* Once start a ghost, and credulity fills up the history of its life, and assigns the cause of its appearance: one tells it one way, another

another way, till there are as many stories about the ghost and about the proprietor of the ghost, as there are about Jesus Christ in these four books.

The story of the appearance of Jesus Christ is told with that strange mixture of the natural and impossible, that distinguishes legendary tale from fact. He is represented as suddenly coming in and going out when the doors were shut, and of vanishing out of sight and appearing again, as one would conceive of an unsubstantial vision; then again he is hungry, sits down to meat, and eats his supper. But as those who tell stories of this kind, never provide for all the cases, so it is here; they have told us that when he arose he left his grave clothes behind him: but they have forgotten to provide other clothes for him to appear in afterwards, or to tell us what he did with them when he ascended: whether he stripped all off, or went up clothes and all. In the case of Elijah, they have been careful enough to make him throw down his mantle; how it happened not to be burned in the chariot of fire, they also have not told us. But as imagination supplies all deficiencies of this kind we may suppose, if we please, that it was made of salamander's wool.

Those who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history may suppose that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ: as they suppose that the books ascribed to Moses have existed ever since the time of Moses. But the fact is historically otherwise; there was no such book as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.

At what time the books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, began to appear, is altogether a matter of uncertainty. There is not the least shadow of evidence of who the persons were that wrote them, nor at what time they were written, and they might as well have been called by the names of any of the other supposed apostles, as by the names they are now called. The originals are not in the possession of any Christian church existing, any more than the two tables of stone written on, they pretend, by the finger of God, upon Mount Sinai, and given to Moses, are in the possession of the Jews. And even if they were, there is no possibility of proving the hand-writing in either

case. At the time those books were written there was no printing, and consequently there could be no publication, otherwise than by written copies, which any man might make or alter at pleasure, and call them originals. Can we suppose it consistent with the wisdom of the Almighty to commit himself and his will to man upon such precarious means as these, or that it is consistent we should pin our faith upon such uncertainties? We cannot make, nor alter, nor even imitate, so much as one blade of grass that he has made; and yet we can make or alter *words of God* as easily as words of man.*

About three hundred and fifty years after the time that Christ is said to have lived, several writings of the kind I am speaking of were scattered in the hands of divers individuals; and as the church had began to form itself into an hierarchy or church government with temporal powers, it set itself about collecting them into a code, as we now see them, called *The New Testament.* They decided by vote, as I have before said in the former part of the "Age of Reason," which of those writings out of the collection they had made, should be the *word of God*, and which should not. The rabbins of the Jews had decided, by vote, upon the books of the Bible before.

As the object of the Church, as is the case in all national establishments of churches, was power and revenue, and terror the means it used, it is consistent to suppose, that the most miraculous and wonderful of the writings they had collected stood the best chance of being voted. And as to the authenticity of the books, *the vote stands in the place of it;* for it can be traced no higher.

* The former part of the "Age of Reason" has not been published two years, and there is already an expression in it that is not mine. The expression is, The book of Luke was carried by a majority of one voice only. It may be true, but it is not I that have said it. Some person, who might know of the circumstances, has added it in a note at the bottom of the page of some of the editions, printed either in England or in America, and the printers, after that, have erected it into the body of the work, and made me the author of it. If this has happened within such a short space of time, notwithstanding the aid of printing, which prevents the alteration of copies individually, what may not have happened in a much greater length of time, when there was no printing, and when any man who could write could make a written copy, and call it an original by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John?

Disputes, however, ran high among the people then calling themselves Christians; not only as to points of doctrine, but as to the authenticity of the books. In the contest between the persons called Saint Augustine and Fauste about the year 400, the latter says, "The books called the Evangelists have been composed long after the time of the apostles, by some obscure men, who, fearing that the world would not give credit to their relation of matters of which they could not be informed, have published them under the name of the apostles; and which are so full of sottishness and discordant relations, that there is neither agreement nor connection between them."

And in another place addressing himself to the advocates of those books as being the word of God, he says, "It is thus that your predecessors have inserted, in the scriptures of our Lord, many things, which, though they carry his name, agree not with his doctrines. This is not surprising, *since that we have often proved* that these things have not been written by himself, nor by his apostles, but that for the greatest part they are founded upon tales, upon *vague reports*, and put together by I know not what, half-Jews, with but little agreement between them; and which they have nevertheless published under the names of the apostles of our Lord, and have thus attributed to them their own *errors and their lies.*"*

The reader will see by these extracts that the authenticity of the Books of the New Testament was denied, and the books treated as tales, forgeries, and lies, at the time they were voted to be the word of God. But the interest of the church, with the assistance of the faggot, bore down the opposition, and at last suppressed all investigation. Miracles followed upon miracles, if we will believe them, and men were taught to say they believed, whether they believed or not. But by way of throwing in a thought, the French Revolution has excommunicated the church from the power of working miracles: she has not been able, with the assistance of all her saints, to work one miracle since the revolution began; and as she never stood in greater need than now, we may,

* I have taken these two extracts from Boulanger's "Life of Paul," written in French. Boulanger has quoted them from the writings of Augustine against Fauste to which he refers.

without the aid of divination, conclude that all her former miracles were tricks and lies.*

When we consider the lapse of more than three hundred years intervening between the time that Christ is said to have lived and the New Testament was formed into a book, even without the assistance of historical evidence, the exceeding uncertainty there is of its authenticity. The authenticity of the book of Homer, as far as regards the authorship, is much better established than that of the New Testament, though Homer is a thousand years the most ancient. It was only an exceeding good poet that could have written the book of Homer, and therefore few men only could have attempted it; and a man capable of doing it would not have thrown away his own fame by giving it to another. In like manner, there were but few that could have composed Euclid's Elements, because none but an exceeding good geometrician could have been the author of that work.

But with respect to the books of the New Testament, particularly such parts as tell us of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, any person who could tell a story of an

* Boulanger, in his "Life of Paul," has collected from the ecclesiastical histories, and the writings of the fathers as they are called, several matters which show the opinions that prevailed among the different sects of Christians at the time the Testament as we now see it was voted to be the word of God. The following extracts are from the second chapter of that work:—

"The Marcionists (a Christian sect) assumed that the Evangelists were filled with falsities. The Manicheans, who formed a very numerous sect at the commencement of Christianity, REJECTED AS FALSE ALL THE NEW TESTAMENT, and showed other writings quite different that they gave for authentic. The Corinthians, like the Marcionists, admitted not the Acts of the Apostles, the Eucratics, and the Severians, adopted neither the Acts nor the Epistles of Paul. Chrysostom, in a homily which he made upon the Acts of the Apostles, says, that in his time, about the year 400, many people knew nothing either of the author or of the book. St. Irene, who lived before that time, reports that the Valentinians, like several other sects of the Christians, accused the scriptures of being filled with imperfections, errors and contradictions. The Ebionites, or Nazarenes, who were the first Christians, rejected all the Epistles of Paul, and regarded him as an impostor. They report, among other things, that he was originally a Pagan, that he came to Jerusalem, where he lived some time; and that having a mind to marry the daughter of the high priest, he caused himself to be circumcised; but that not being able to obtain her, he quarrelled with the Jews, and wrote against circumcision, and against the observation of the Sabbath, and against all the legal ordinances."

apparition, or of a man's walking, could have made such books; for the story is most wretchedly told. The chance, therefore, of forgery in the New Testament, is millions to one greater than in the case of Homer or Euclid. Of the numerous priests or parsons of the present day, bishops and all, every one of them can make a sermon, or translate a scrap of Latin, especially if it has been translated a thousand times before; but is there any amongst them that can write poetry like Homer, or science like Euclid? The sum total of a parson's learning, with very few exceptions, is *a b, ab*, and *hic, hæc, hoc;* and their knowledge of science is three times one are three; and this is more than sufficient to have enabled them, had they lived at the time, to have written all the books of the New Testament.

As the opportunities of forgery were greater, so also was the inducement. A man could gain no advantage by writing under the name of Homer or Euclid; if he could write equal to them, it would be better that he wrote under his own name; if inferior, he could not succeed. Pride would prevent the former, and impossibility the latter. But with respect to such books as compose the New Testament, all the inducements were on the side of forgery. The best imagined history that could have been made, at the distance of two or three hundred years after the time, could not have passed for an original under the name of the real writer. The only chance of success lay in forgery, for the church wanted pretence for its new doctrine, and truth and talents were out of the question.

But as it is not uncommon (as before observed) to relate stories of persons walking after they are dead, and of ghosts and apparitions of such as have fallen by some violent or extraordinary means; and as the people of that day were in the habit of believing such things, and of the appearance of angels, and also of devils, and of their getting into peoples' inside, and shaking them like a fit of an ague, and of their being cast out again as if by an emetic. (Mary Magdalene, the book of Mark tells us, had brought up, or been brought to bed of seven devils); it was nothing extraordinary that some story of this kind should get abroad of the person called Jesus Christ, and become afterwards the foundation of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each writer told the tale as he heard it,

or thereabouts, and gave to his book the name of the saint or the apostle whom tradition had given as the eye-witness. It is only upon this ground that the contradictions in those books can be accounted for; and if this be not the case, they are downright impositions, lies, and forgeries, without even the apology of credulity.

That they had been written by a sort of half-Jews, as the foregoing quotations mention, is discernible enough. The frequent references made to that chief assassin and impostor Moses, and to the men called prophets, establish this point, and on the other hand, the church has complimented the fraud, by admitting the Bible and the Testament to reply to each other. Between the Christian-Jew and the Christian-Gentile, the thing called a prophesy, and the thing prophesied; the type, and the thing typified; the sign, and the thing signified, have been industriously rummaged up, and fitted together like old locks and picklock keys. The story foolishly enough told of Eve and the serpent, and natural enough as to the enmity between men and serpents (for the serpent always bites about the *heel*, because it cannot reach higher; and the man always knocks the serpent about the *head*, as the most effectual way to prevent its biting; *) this foolish story, I say, has been made into a prophesy, a type, and a promise to begin with; and the lying imposition of Isaiah to Ahaz, *That a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*, as a sign that Ahaz should conquer, when the event was that he was defeated (as already noticed in the observations on the book of Isaiah), has been perverted, and made to serve as winder up.

Jonah and the whale are also made up into a sign, or type. Jonah is Jesus, and the whale is the grave; for it is said (and they have made Christ to say it of himself), Matt. xii., verse 40: "For as Jonah was *three days and three nights* in the whale's belly, so shall the son of man be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth." But it happens awkwardly enough that Christ, according to their own account, was but one day and two nights in the grave: about 36 hours instead of 72—that is, the Friday night, the Saturday, and the Saturday night; for they say he was up

* "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—GENESIS, chapter iii., verse 15.

on the Sunday morning by sunrise, or before. But as this fits quite as well as the *bite* and the *kick* in Genesis, or the *virgin* and her *son* in Isaiah, it will pass in the lump of *orthodox* things. Thus much for the historical part of the Testament and its evidences.

Epistles of Paul.—The epistles ascribed to Paul, being fourteen in number, almost fill up the remaining part of the Testament. Whether those epistles were written by the person to whom they are ascribed is a matter of no great importance, since the writer, whoever he was, attempts to prove his doctrine by argument. He does not pretend to have been witness to any of the scenes told of the resurrection and the ascension: and he declares that he had not believed them.

The story of his being struck to the ground as he was journeying to Damascus, has nothing in it miraculous or extraordinary; he escaped with life, and that is more than many others have done, who have been struck with lightning; and that he should lose his sight for three days, and be unable to eat or drink during that time, is nothing more than is common in such conditions. His companions that were with him appear not to have suffered in the same manner, for they were well enough to lead him the remainder of the journey; neither did they pretend to have seen any vision.

The character of the person called Paul, according to the accounts given of him, has in it a great deal of violence and fanaticism; he had persecuted with as much heat as he preached afterwards; the stroke he had received had changed his thinking, without altering his constitution; and either as a Jew or a Christian, he was the same zealot. Such men are never good moral evidences of any doctrine they preach. They are always in extremes, as well of action as of belief.

The doctrine he sets out to prove by argument is the resurrection of the same body: and he advances this as an evidence of immortality. But so much will men differ in their manner of thinking, and in the conclusions they draw from the same premises, that this doctrine of the resurrection of the same body so far from an evidence of immortality, appears to me to furnish an evidence against it; for if I have already died in this body, and am raised again in the same

body in which I have died, it is presumptive evidence that I shall die again. That resurrection no more secures me against the repetition of dying, than an ague fit, when past, secures me against another. To believe, therefore, in immortality, I must have a more elevated idea than is contained in the gloomy doctrine of the resurrection.

Besides, as a matter of choice, as well as of hope, I had rather have a better body and a more convenient form than the present. Every animal in the creation excels us in something. The winged insects, without mentioning doves or eagles, can pass over more space and with greater ease, in a few minutes, than man can in an hour. The glide of the smallest fish, in proportion to its bulk, exceeds us in motion, almost beyond comparison, and without weariness. Even the sluggish snail can ascend from the bottom of a dungeon, where a man, by the want of that ability, would perish; and a spider can launch itself from the top, as a playful amusemnet. The personal powers of man are so limited, and his heavy frame so little constructed to extensive enjoyment, that there is nothing to induce us to wish the opinion of Paul to be true. It is too little for the magnitude of the scene: too mean for the sublimity of the subject.

But all other arguments apart, the *consciousness of existence* is the only conceivable idea we can have of another life, and the continuance of that consciousness is immortality. The consciousness of existence, or the knowing that we exist, is not necessarily confined to the same form, nor to the same matter even in this life.

We have not in all cases the same form, nor in any case the same matter that composed our bodies twenty or thirty years ago; and yet we are conscious of being the same persons. Even legs and arms, which make up almost half the human frame, are not necessary to the consciousness of existence. These may be lost or taken away, and the full consciousness of existence remain; and were they to be supplied by wings or other appendages, we cannot conceive that it could alter our consciousness of existence. In short, we know not how much, or rather how little, of our composition it is, and how exquisitely fine that little is, that creates in us this consciousness of existence; and all beyond that is like the pulp of a peach, distinct and separate from the vegetative speck in the kernel.

Who can say by what exceeding fine action of fine matter it is that a thought is produced in what we call the mind? and yet that thought when produced, as I now produce the thought I am writing, is capable of becoming immortal, and is the only production of man that has that capacity.

Statues of brass or marble will perish; and statues made in imitation of them are not the same statues, nor the same workmanship, any more than the copy of a picture is the same picture. But print and reprint a thought a thousand times over, and that with materials of any kind; carve it in wood, or engrave it on stone, the thought is eternally and identically the same thought in every case. It has a capacity of unimpaired existence, unaffected by change of matter, and is essentially distinct, and of a nature different from everything else that we know or can conceive. If, then, the thing produced has in itself a capacity of being immortal, it is more than a token that the power that produced it, which is the self-same thing as consciousness of existence, can be immortal also; and that as independently of the matter it was first connected with, as the thought is of the printing or writing it first appeared in. The one idea is not more difficult to believe than the other; and we can see that one is true.

That the consciousness of existence is not dependent on the same form or the same matter, is demonstrated to our senses in the works of the creation; as far as our senses are capable of receiving that demonstration. A very numerous part of the animal creation preaches to us, far better than Paul, the belief of a life hereafter. Their little life resembles an earth and a heaven: a present and a future state; and comprises, if it may be so expressed, immortality in miniature.

The most beautiful parts of the creation to our eye are the winged insects, and they are not so originally. They acquire that form and that inimitable brilliancy by progressive changes. The slow and creeping caterpillar-worm of to-day passes in a few days to a torpid figure, and a state resembling death, and in the next change comes forth, in all the miniature magnificence of life, a splendid butterfly. No resemblance of the former creature remains; everything is changed; all his powers are new, and life is to him another thing. We cannot conceive that the consciousness

of existence is not the same in this state of the animal as before; why, then, must I believe that the resurrection of the same body is necessary to continue to me the consciousness of existence hereafter?

In the former part of the "Age of Reason," I have called the creation the true and only real word of God; and this instance, or this text, in the book of creation, not only shows to us that this thing may be so, but that it is so; and that the belief of a future state is a rational belief founded upon facts visible in the creation; for it is not more difficult to believe that we shall exist hereafter in a better state and form than at present, than that a worm should become a butterfly, and quit the dunghill for the atmosphere, if we did not know it as a fact.

As to the doubtful jargon ascribed to Paul, in the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, which makes part of the burial service of some Christian sectaries, it is as destitute of meaning as the tolling of the bell at the funeral. It explains nothing to the understanding; it illustrates nothing to the imagination; but leaves the reader to find any meaning if he can. All flesh (says he) is not the same flesh. There is one flesh of men; another of beasts; another of fishes; and another of birds. And what then? nothing. A cook could have said as much. There are also (says he) bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial; the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. And what then? nothing. And what is the difference? nothing that he has told. There is (says he) one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. And what then? nothing; except that he says that *one star differeth from another star in glory* instead of distance; and he might as well have told us, that the moon did not shine so bright as the sun. All this is nothing better than the jargon of a conjuror, who picks up phrases he does not understand, to confound the credulous people who come to have their fortunes told. Priests and conjurors are of the same trade.

Sometimes Paul affects to be a naturalist, and to prove his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation. "Thou fool (says he) that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." To which one might reply, in his own language, and say, Thou fool, Paul, that which thou sowest

is not quickened, except it die not; for the grain that dies in the ground never does, nor can vegetate. It is only the living grains that produce the next crop. But the metaphor, in any point of view, is no simile. It is succession and not resurrection.

The progress of an animal from one state of being to another, as from a worm to a butterfly, applies to the case; but this of the grain does not, and shows Paul to have been what he says of others, *a fool.*

Whether the fourteen epistles ascribed to Paul were written by him or not is a matter of indifference; they are either argumentative or dogmatical, and as the argument is defective, and the dogmatical part is merely presumptive, it signifies not who wrote them. And the same may be said for the remaining parts of the Testament. It is not upon the epistles, but upon what is called the gospel, contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and upon the pretended prophesies, that the theory of the Church, calling itself the Christian Church, is founded. The epistles are dependent upon those, and must follow their fate: for if the story of Jesus Christ be fabulous, all reasoning founded upon it as a supposed truth must fall with it.

We know, from history, that one of the principal leaders of this Church, Athanasius, lived at the time the New Testament was formed;* and we know also, from the absurd jargon he has left us, under the name of a creed, the character of the men who formed the New Testament: and we know also, from the same history, that the authenticity of the books of which it is composed was denied at the time. It was upon the vote of such as Athanasius, that the Testament was decreed to be the word of God; and nothing can present to us a more strange idea, than that of decreeing the word of God by vote. Those who rest their faith upon such authority, put man in the place of God, and have no true foundation for future happiness; credulity, however, is not a crime; but it becomes criminal by resisting conviction. It is strangling in the womb of the conscience the efforts it makes to ascertain truth. We should never force belief upon ourselves in anything.

* Athanasius died, according to the Church chronology, in the year 371.

I here close the subject on the Old Testament and the New. The evidence I have produced, to prove them forgeries, is extracted from the books themselves, and acts like a two-edged sword, either way. If the evidence be denied, the authenticity of the Scriptures is denied with it: for it is Scripture evidence; and if the evidence be admitted, the authenticity of the books is disproved. The contradictory impossibilities contained in the Old Testament, and in the New, put them in the case of a man who swears for and against. Either evidence convicts him of perjury, and equally destroys reputation.

Should the Bible and Testament hereafter fall, it is not I that have been the occasion. I have done no more than extracted the evidence from the confused mass of matter with which it is mixed, and arranged that evidence in a point of light to be clearly seen and easily comprehended; and, having done this, I leave the reader to judge for himself, as I have judged for myself.

CONCLUSION.

In the former part of the "Age of Reason," I have spoken of the three frauds, *mystery*, *miracle*, and *prophesy;* and as I have seen nothing in any of the answers to that work, that in the least affects what I have there said upon those subjects, I shall not encumber this Second Part with additions that are not necessary.

I have spoken also in the same work upon what is called *revelation*, and have shown the absurd misapplication of that term of the books of the Old Testament and the New; for certainly revelation is out of the question in reciting anything of which man has been the actor, or the witness. That which a man has done or seen needs no revelation to tell him he has done it, or seen it; for he knows it already, nor to enable him to tell it, or to write it. It is ignorance, or imposition, to apply the term revelation in such cases; yet the Bible and Testament are classed under this fraudulent description of being all *revelation.*

Revelation, then, so far as the term has relation between God and man, can only be applied to something which God

reveals of his *will* to man; but though the power of the Almighty to make such a communication is necessarily admitted, because to that power all things are possible, yet the things so revealed (if anything ever was revealed, and which, by the bye, it is impossible to prove) is revelation to the person *only to whom it is made*. His account of it to another is not revelation; and whoever puts faith in that account puts it on the man from whom the account comes; and that man may have been deceived, or may have dreamed it; or he may be an impostor, and may lie. There is no possible criterion whereby to judge of the truth of what he tells: for even the morality of it would be no proof of revelation. In all such cases the proper answer would be: "When it is revealed to me I will believe it to be a revelation: but it is not and cannot be incumbent upon me to believe it to be revelation before; neither is it proper that I should take the word of a man as the word of God and put man in the place of God." This is the manner in which I have spoken of revelation in the former part of the "Age of Reason," and which, while it reverentially admits revelation as a possible thing, because, as before said, to the Almighty all things are possible, it prevents the imposition of one man upon another, and precludes the wicked use of pretended revelation.

But though, speaking for myself, I thus admit the possibility of revelation, I totally disbelieve that the Almighty ever did communicate anything to man, by any mode of speech, in any language, or by any kind of vision, or appearance, or by any means which our senses are capable of receiving, otherwise than by the universal display of himself in the works of the creation, and by that repugnance we feel in ourselves to bad actions, and disposition to good ones.

The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries, that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing called revelation, or revealed religion. It has been the most dishonorable belief against the character of the Divinity, the most destructive to morality, and the peace and happiness of man, that ever was propagated since man began to exist. It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils to roam at large, and to preach publicly the doctrine

of devils, if there were any such, than that we permitted one such impostor and monster as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and the Bible prophets, to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit among us.

Whence arose all the horrid assassinations of whole nations of men, women, and infants, with which the Bible is filled: and the bloody persecutions, and tortures unto death, and religious wars, that since that time have laid Europe in blood and ashes: whence arose they, but from this impious thing called revealed religion, and this monstrous belief, that God has spoken to man? The lies of the Bible have been the cause of the one, and the lies of the Testament of the other.

Some Christians pretend that Christianity was not established by the sword: but of what period of time do they speak? It was impossible that twelve men could begin with the sword; they had not the power; but no sooner were the professors of Christianity sufficiently powerful to employ the sword, than they did so, and the stake and the faggot too; and Mahomet could not do it sooner. By the same spirit that Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (if the story be true), he would have cut off his head, and the head of his master, had he been able. Besides this, Christianity grounds itself originally upon the Bible, and the Bible was established altogether by the sword, and that in the worst use of it: not to terrify, but to extirpate. The Jews made no converts, they butchered all. The Bible is the sire of the Testament, and both are called the *word of God.* The Christians read both books; the ministers preach from both books; and this thing called Christianity is made up of both. It is, then, false to say that Christianity was not established by the sword.

The only sect that have not persecuted are the Quakers; and the only reason that can be given for it is, that they are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the Scriptures a dead letter. Had they called them by a worse name they had been nearer the truth.

It is incumbent on every man who reverences the character of the Creator, and who wishes to lessen the catalogue of artificial miseries, and remove the cause that has sown persecutions thick among mankind, to expel all ideas of revealed

religion as a dangerous heresy, and an impious fraud. What is it that we have learned from this pretended thing called revealed religion?—nothing that is useful to man, and everything that is dishonorable to his Maker. What is it the Bible teaches us?—rapine, cruelty, and murder. What is it the Testament teaches us?—to believe that the Almighty committed debauchery with a woman engaged to be married! and the belief of this debauchery is called faith.

As to the fragments of morality that are irregularly and thinly scattered in these books, they make no part of this pretended thing, revealed religion. There are the natural dictates of conscience, and the bonds by which society is held together, and without which it cannot exist; and are nearly the same in all religions, and in all societies. The Testament teaches nothing new upon this subject; and where it attempts to exceed, it becomes mean and ridiculous. The doctrine of not retaliating injuries is much better expressed in Proverbs, which is a collection as well from the Gentiles as the Jews, than it is in the Testament. It is there said, Proverbs xxv., verse 21, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink."* But when it is said, as in the Testament, "If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;" it is assassinating the dignity of forbearance, and sinking man into a spaniel.

Loving enemies, is another dogma of feigned morality, and has, besides, no meaning. It is incumbent on man, as a

* According to what is called Christ's sermon on the mount, in the book of Matthew, where, among some other good things, a great deal of this feigned morality is introduced, it is there expressly said, that the doctrine of forbearance, or of not retaliating injuries, was not any part of the doctrine of the Jews; but as this doctrine is found in Proverbs, it must, according to that statement, have been copied from the Gentiles, from whom Christ had learned it. Those men whom Jewish and Christian idolaters have abusively called heathens, had much better and clearer ideas of justice and morality, than are to be found in the Old Testament, so far as it is Jewish; or in the New. The answer of Solon on the question, "Which is the most perfect popular government?" has never been exceeded by any man since his time, as containing a maxim of political morality. "That," says he, "where the least injury done to the meanest individual is considered as an insult to the whole institution." Solon lived about 500 years before Christ.

moralist that he does not revenge an injury; and it is equally as good in a political sense, for there is no end to retaliation; each retaliates on the other, and calls it justice: but to love in proportion to the injury, if it could be done, would be to offer a premium for a crime. Besides, the word *enemies* is too vague and general to be used in a moral maxim, which ought always to be clear and defined, like a proverb. If a man be the enemy of another from mistake and prejudice, as in the case of religious opinions, and sometimes in politics, that man is different to an enemy at heart with a criminal intention; and it is incumbent upon us, as it contributes also to our own tranquility, that we put the best construction upon a thing that it will bear. But even this erroneous motive in him makes no motive for love on the other part; and to say that we can love voluntarily, and without a motive, is morally and physically impossible.

Morality is injured by prescribing to its duties that, in the first place, are impossible to be performed: and if they could be, would be productive of evil; or, as before said, be premiums for crime. The maxim of *doing as we would be done unto*, does not include this strange doctrine of loving enemies: for no man expects to be loved himself for his crime or for his enmity.

Those who preach this doctrine of loving their enemies are in general the greatest persecutors, and they act consistently by so doing; for the doctrine is hypocritical, and it is natural that hypocrisy should act the reverse of what it preaches. For my own part, I disown the doctrine, and consider it as a feigned or fabulous morality; yet the man does not exist that can say I have persecuted him, or any man, or any set of men, either in the American Revolution, or in the French Revolution; or that I have, in any case, returned evil for evil. But it is not incumbent on man to reward a bad action with a good one, or to return good for evil; and wherever it is done, it is a voluntary act, and not a duty. It is also absurd to suppose that such doctrine can make any part of a revealed religion. We imitate the moral character of the Creator by forbearing with each other, for he forbears with all; but this doctrine would imply that he loved man, not in proportion as he was good, but as he was bad.

If we consider the nature of our condition here, we must

see there is no occasion for such a thing as *revealed religion.* What is it we want to know? Does not the creation, the universe we behold, preach to us the existence of an Almighty power that governs and regulates the whole? And is not the evidence that this creation holds out to our senses infinitely stronger than anything we can read in a book that any impostor might make and call the word of God? As for morality, the knowledge of it exists in every man's conscience.

Here we are. The existence of an Almighty power is sufficiently demonstrated to us, though we cannot conceive as it is impossible we should, the nature and manner of its existence. We cannot conceive how we came here ourselves and yet we know for a fact that we are here. We must know also, that the power that called us into being can, if he please, and when he pleases, call us to account for the manner in which we have lived here: and therefore, without seeking any other motive for the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for we know beforehand that he can. The probability or even possibility of the thing, is all that we ought to know; for if we know it as a fact, we should be the mere slaves of terror; our belief would have no merit, and our best actions no virtue.

Deism, then, teaches us, without the possibility of being deceived, all that it is necessary or proper to be known. The creation is the Bible of the Deist. He there reads in the hand-writing of the Creator himself, the certainty of his existence, and the immutability of his power, and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him forgeries. The probability that we may be called to account hereafter, will, to a reflecting mind, have the influence of belief; for it is not belief or disbelief that can make or unmake the fact. As this is the state we are in and which it is proper we should be in as free agents, it is the fool only, and not the philosopher, or even the prudent man, that would live as if there were no God.

But the belief of a God is so weakened by being mixed with the strange fable of the Christian creed, and with the wild adventures related in the Bible, and of the obscurity and obscene nonsense of the Testament, that the mind of man is bewildered as in a fog. Viewing all these things in a confused mass, he confounds fact with fable; and as he

cannot believe all, he feels a disposition to reject all. But the belief of a God is a belief distinct from all other things, and ought not to be confounded with any. The notion of a trinity of Gods has enfeebled the belief of one God. A multiplication of beliefs acts as a division of belief; and in proportion as anything is divided it is weakened.

Religion, by such means, becomes a thing of form instead of fact; of notion instead of principle; morality is banished to make room for an imaginary thing called faith, and this faith has its origin in a supposed debauchery; a man is preached instead of God: an execution is an object for gratitude; the preachers daub themselves with the blood like a troop of assassins, and pretend to admire the brilliancy it gives them: they preach a humdrum sermon on the merits of the execution: then praise Jesus Christ for being executed, and condemn the Jews for doing it.

A man, by hearing all this nonsense lumped and preached together, confounds the God of the creation with the imagined God of the Christians, and lives as if there were none.

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid, or produces only atheists or fanatics. As an engine of power it serves the purpose of despotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter.

The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple Deism. It must have been the first, and will probably be the last that man believes. But pure and simple Deism does not answer the purpose of despotic governments. They cannot lay hold of religion as an engine, but by mixing it with human inventions, and making their own authority a part; neither does it answer the avarice of priests, but by incorporating themselves and their functions with it, and becoming, like the government, a party in the system. It is this that forms the otherwise mysterious connection of Church and State; the Church humane, and the State tyrannic.

Were a man impressed as fully and as strongly as he ought to be with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief; he would stand in awe of God and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force, it is necessary that it acts alone. This is Deism.

But when, according to the Christian Trinitarian scheme, one part of God is represented by a dying man, and another part, called the Holy Ghost, by a flying pigeon, it is impossible that belief can attach itself to such wild conceits.*

It has been the scheme of the Christian Church, and of all the other invented systems of religion, to hold man in ignorance of the Creator, as it is of government to hold man in ignorance of his rights. The systems of the one are as false as those of the other, and are calculated for mutual support. The study of theology, as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing, it rests on no principles, it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and it admits of no conclusion. Not anything can be studied as a science, without our being in possession of the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing.

Instead, then, of studying theology, as is now done, out of the Bible and Testament, the meanings of which books are always controverted, and the authenticity of which is disproved, it is necessary that we refer to the Bible of the creation. The principles we discover there are eternal, and of divine origin: they are the foundation of all the science that exists in the world, and must be the foundation of theology.

We can know God only through his works. We cannot have a conception of any one attribute, but by following

* The book called the book of Matthew, says, chap. iii., verse 16, that the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove. It might as well have said a goose; the creatures are equally harmless, and the one is as much a nonsensical lie as the other. The second of Acts, verses 2 and 3, says that it descended in a mighty rushing wind, in the shape of cloven tongues—perhaps it was cloven feet. Such absurd stuff is only fit for tales of witches and wizards.

some principle that leads to it. We have only a confused idea of his power if we have not the means of comprehending something of its immensity. We can have no idea of his wisdom, but by knowing the order and manner in which it acts. The principles of science lead to this knowledge; for the creator of man is the creator of science, and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were, face to face.

Could a man be placed in a situation, and endowed with the power of vision, to behold at one view, and to contemplate deliberately, the structure of the universe; to mark the movements of the several planets, the cause of their varying appearances, the unerring order in which they revolve, even to the remotest comet: their connexions and dependence on each other, and to know the systems of laws established by the Creator, that governs and regulates the the whole; he would then conceive far beyond what any church theology can teach him, the power, the wisdom, the vastness, the munificence of the Creator; he would then see that all the knowledge man has of science, and that all the mechanical arts by which he renders his situation comfortable here, are derived from that source; his mind, exalted by the scene, and convinced by the fact, would increase in gratitude as it increased in knowledge: his religion or his worship would become united with his improvement as a man; any employment he followed, that had connexion with the principles of the creation, as everything of agriculture, of science, and of the mechanical art has, would teach him more of God, and of the gratitude he owes to him, than any theological Christian sermon he now hears. Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the grovelling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt.

Though a man cannot arrive, at least in this life, at the actual scene I have described, he can demonstrate it; because he has a knowledge of the principles upon which the creation is constructed. We know that the greatest works can be represented in model, and the universe can be represented by the same means. The same principles by which we measure an inch, or an acre of ground, will measure to millions in extent. A circle of an inch diameter has the

same geometrical properties as a circle that would circumscribe the universe. The same properties of a triangle that will demonstrate upon paper the course of a ship will do it on the ocean; and when applied to what are called the heavenly bodies, will ascertain to a minute the time of an eclipse, though those bodies are millions of miles distant from us. This knowledge is of divine origin; and it is from the Bible of the creation that man has learned it, and not from the stupid Bible of the church, that teaches man nothing.*

All the knowledge man has of science and machinery, by the aid of which his existence is rendered comfortable upon earth, and without which he would be scarcely distinguishable in appearance and condition from a common animal, comes from the great machine and structure of the universe. The constant and unwearied observations of our ancestors, upon the movements and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, in what are supposed to have been the early ages of the world, have brought this knowledge upon earth. It is not Moses and the prophets, nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles, that have done it. The Almighty is the great mechanic of the creation; the first philosopher, and original teacher of all science. Let us, then, learn to reverence our master, and let us not forget the labors of our ancestors.

Had we at this day no knowledge of machinery, and were it possible that man could have a view, as I have before

* The Bible-makers had undertaken to give us, in the first chapter of Genesis, an account of the creation; and, in doing this, they have demonstrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there to have been three days and three nights, evenings and mornings, before there was a sun; when it is the presence or absence of the sun that is the cause of day and night, and what is called his rising and setting that of morning and evening. Besides, it is a puerile and pitiful idea to suppose the Almighty to say, Let there be light. It is the imperative manner of speaking that a conjuror uses, when he says to his cups and balls Presto, begone, and most probably has been taken from it; as Moses and his rod are a conjuror and his wand. Longinus calls this expression the sublime; and, by the same rule, the conjuror is sublime too, for the manner of speaking is expressively and grammatically the same. When authors and critics talk of the sublime, they see not how nearly it borders on the ridiculous. The sublime of critics, like some parts of Edmund Burke's "Sublime and Beautiful," is like a windmill just visible in a fog, which imagination might distort into a flying mountain, or an archangel, or a flock of wild geese.

described, of the structure and machinery of the universe, he would soon conceive the idea of constructing some at least of the mechanical works we now have; and the idea so conceived would progressively advance in practice. Or could a model of the universe, such as is called an orrery, be presented before him, and put in motion, his mind would arrive at the same idea. Such an object, and such a subject, would, whilst it improved him in knowledge useful to himself as a man and a member of society, as well as being entertaining, afford far better matter for impressing him with a knowledge of, and a belief in the Creator, and of the reverence and gratitude that man owes to him, than the stupid texts of the Bible and Testament, from which, be the talents of the preacher what they may, only stupid sermons can be preached. If man must preach, let him preach something that is edifying, and from texts that are known to be true.

The Bible of the creation is inexhaustible in texts. Every part of science, whether connected with the geometry of the universe, with the systems of animal and vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy; for gratitude as for human improvement. It will, perhaps, be said, that if such a revolution in the system of religion take place, every preacher ought to be a philosopher. *Most certainly;* and every house of devotion a school of science.

It has been by wandering from the immutable laws of science, and the right use of reason, and setting up an invented thing called revealed religion, that so many wild and blasphemous conceits have been formed of the Almighty. The Jews have made him the assassin of the human species, to make room for the religion of the Jews. The Christians have made him the murderer of himself, and the founder of a new religion, to supersede and expel the Jewish religion. And to find pretence and admission for these things they must have supposed his power or his wisdom imperfect, or his will changeable; and the changeableness of the will is the imperfection of the judgment. The philosopher knows that the laws of the Creator have never changed, with respect either to the principles of science, or the properties of matter. Why, then, is it to be supposed they have changed with respect to man?

I here close the subject. I have shown in all the foregoing parts of this work, that the Bible and Testament are impositions and forgeries; and I leave the evidence I have produced in proof of it, to be refuted, if anyone can do it; and I leave the ideas that are suggested in the conclusion of the work, to rest on the mind of the reader; certain as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

PART III.

To the Ministers and Preachers of all denominations of Religion.

It is the duty of every man, as far as his ability extends, to detect and expose delusion and error. But nature has not given to everyone a talent for that purpose; and among those to whom such a talent is given, there is often a want of disposition or of courage to do it.

The world, or more properly speaking, that small part of it called Christendom, or the Christian world, has been amused for more than a thousand years with accounts of prophesies in the Old Testament about the coming of the person called Jesus Christ, and thousands of sermons have been preached, and volumes written to make man believe it.

In the following treatise I have examined all the passages in the New Testament, quoted from the Old, and called prophesies concerning Jesus Christ, and I find no such thing as a prophesy of any such person, and I deny there are any. The passages all relate to circumstances the Jewish nation was in at the time they were written or spoken, and not to anything that was or was not to happen in the world several hundred years afterwards; and I have shown what the circumstances were, to which the passage apply or refer. I have given chapter and verse for everything I have said, and have not gone out of the books of the Old and New Testament for evidence, that the passages are not prophesies of the person called Jesus Christ.

The prejudice of unfounded belief often degenerates into the prejudice of custom, and becomes, at last, rank hypocrisy. When men from custom or fashion, or any worldly motive, profess or pretend to believe what they do not believe, nor can give any reason for believing, they unship the helm of their morality, and being no longer honest to their own minds, they feel no moral difficulty in being unjust to others. It is from the influence of this vice, hypocrisy, that we see so many church and meeting-going professors and pretenders to religion, so full of trick and deceit in their dealings, and so loose in the performance of their engagements, that they are not to be trusted further than the laws of the country will bind them. Morality has no hold on their minds, no restraint on their actions.

One set of preachers make salvation to consist in believing. They tell their congregations, that if they believe in Christ, their sins shall be forgiven. This, in the first place, is an encouragement to sin, in a similar manner as when a prodigal young fellow is told his father will pay all his debts, he runs into debt the faster, and becomes the more extravagant. Daddy, says he, pays all, and on he goes. Just so in the other case, Christ pays all, and on goes the sinner.

In the next place, the doctrine these men preach is not true. The New Testament rests itself for credibility and testimony on what are called prophesies in the Old Testament of the person called Jesus Christ; and if there are no such things as prophesies of any such person in the Old Testament, the New Testament is a forgery of the councils of Nice and Laodicea, and the faith founded thereon, delusion and falsehood.*

Another set of preachers tell their congregations that God predestined and selected from all eternity a certain number to be saved, and a certain number to be damned eternally. If this were true, *the day of judgment* IS PAST: *their preaching* is in vain, and they had better work at some useful calling for their livelihood.

* The councils of Nice and Laodicea were held about 350 years after the time Christ is said to have lived; and the books that now compose the New Testament were then voted for by YEAS and NAYS, as we now vote a law. A great many that were offered had a majority of NAYS, and were rejected. This is the way the New Testament came into being.

This doctrine also, like the former, hath a direct tendency to demoralise mankind. Can a bad man be reformed by telling him, that if he is one of those who was decreed to be damned before he was born, his reformation will do him no good; and if he was decreed to be saved, he will be saved, whether he believes it or not? for this is the result of the doctrine. Such preaching and such preachers do injury to the moral world. They had better be at the plough.

As in my political works my motive and object have been to give man an elevated sense of his own character, and to free him from the slavish and superstitious absurdity of monarchy and hereditary government; so in my publications on religious subjects, my endeavors have been directed to bring man to a right use of the reason that God has given him; to impress on him the great principles of divine morality, justice, mercy, and a benevolent disposition to all men, and to all creatures, and to inspire in him a spirit of trust, confidence, and consolation in his Creator, unshackled by the fables of books pretending to be *the word of God.*

THOMAS PAINE.

AN ESSAY ON DREAMS.

As a great deal is said in the New Testament about dreams, it is first necessary to explain the nature of dreams, and to show by what operation of the mind a dream is produced during sleep. When this is understood, we shall be the better enabled to judge whether any reliance can be placed upon them; and, consequently, whether several matters in the New Testament related of dreams, deserve the credit which the writers of that book, and priests and commentators, ascribe to them.

In order to understand the nature of dreams, or that which passes in ideal vision during a state of sleep, it is first necessary to understand the composition and decomposition of the human mind.

The three great faculties of the mind are IMAGINATION, JUDGMENT, and MEMORY. Every action of the mind comes under one or other of these faculties. In a state of wakefulness, as in the daytime, these three faculties are all active;

but that is seldom the case in sleep, and never perfectly; and this is the cause that our dreams are not so regular and rational as our waking thoughts.

The seat of that collection of powers or faculties that constitute what is called the mind, is in the brain. There is not, and cannot be, any visible demonstration of this anatomically, but accidents happening to living persons show it to be so. An injury done to the brain by a fracture of the skull will sometimes change a wise man into a childish idiot—a being without mind. But so careful has nature been of that *sanctum sanctorum* of man, the brain, that of all the external accidents to which humanity is subject, this happens the most seldom. But we often see it happening by long and habitual intemperance.

Whether those three faculties occupy distinct apartments of the brain, is known only to the Almighty power that formed and organised it. We can see the external effects of muscular motion in all the members of the body, though its *primum mobile*, or first moving cause, is unknown to man. Our external motions are sometimes the effect of intention, and sometimes not. If we are sitting and intend to rise, or standing and intend to sit or walk, the limbs obey that intention as if they heard the order given. But we make a thousand motions every day, and that as well waking as sleeping, that have no prior intention to direct them. Each member acts as if it had a will or mind of its own. Man governs the whole when he pleases to govern, but in the interims the several parts, like little suburbs, govern themselves without consulting the sovereign.

But all these motions, whatever be the generating cause, are external and visible. But with respect to the brain, no ocular observation can be made upon it. All is mystery, all is darkness in that womb of thought.

Whether the brain is a mass of matter in continual rest—whether it has a vibrating pulsative motion, or a heaving and falling motion, like matter in fermentation—whether different parts of the brain have different motions according to the faculty employed, be it the imagination, the judgment, or the memory, man knows nothing of it. He knows not the cause of his own wit: his own brain conceals it from him.

Comparing invisible by visible things, as metaphysical

can sometimes be compared by physical things, the operations of these distinct and several faculties have some resemblance to the mechanism of a watch. The mainspring, which puts all in motion, corresponds to the imagination; the pendulum, or balance, which corrects and regulates that motion, corresponds to the judgment; and the hand and dial, like the memory, record the operations.

Now in proportion to these several faculties sleep, slumber, or keep awake, during the continuance of a dream, in that proportion will the dream be reasonable or frantic, remembered or forgotten.

If there is any faculty in mental man that never sleeps, it is that volatile thing, the imagination: the case is different with the judgment and memory. The sedate and sober constitution of the judgment easily disposes it to rest; and as to the memory, it records in silence, and is active only when it is called upon.

That the judgment soon goes to sleep may be perceived by our sometimes beginning to dream before we are fully asleep ourselves. Some random thought runs in the mind, and we start as it were into recollection that we are dreaming between sleeping and waking.

If the judgment sleeps while the imagination keeps awake, the dream will be a riotous assemblage of misshapen images and ranting ideas; and the more active the imagination is, the wilder the dream will be. The most inconsistent and the most impossible things will appear right, because that faculty whose province it is to keep order, is in a state of absence. The master of the school is gone out, and the boys are in an uproar.

If the memory sleeps, we shall have no other knowledge of the dream than that we have dreamt, without knowing what it was about. In this case it is sensation, rather than recollection, that acts. The dream has given us some sense of pain or trouble, and we feel it as a hurt, rather than remember it as a vision.

If memory only slumbers, we shall have a faint remembrance of the dream, and after a few minutes it will sometimes happen that the principal passages of the dream will occur to us more fully. The cause of this is, that the memory will sometimes continue slumbering or sleeping after we are awake ourselves, and that so fully, that it may and

sometimes does happen, that we do not immediately recollect where we are, nor what we have been about, or what we have to do. But when the memory starts into wakefulness, it brings the knowledge of these things back upon us like a flood of light, and sometimes the dream with it.

But the most curious circumstance of the mind in a state of dream, is the power it has to become the agent of every person, character, and thing of which it dreams. It carries on conversation with several, asks questions, hears answers, gives and receives information, and it acts all these parts itself.

But however various and eccentric the imagination may be in the creation of images and ideas, it cannot supply the place of memory, with respect to things that are forgotten when we are awake. For example, if we have forgotten the name of a person, and dream of seeing him, and asking him his name, he cannot tell it; for it is ourselves asking ourselves the question.

But though the imagination cannot supply the place of real memory, it has the wild faculty of counterfeiting memory. It dreams of persons it never knew, and talks with them as if it remembered them as old acquaintances. It relates circumstances that never happened, and tells them as if they had happened. It goes to places that never existed, and knows where all the streets and houses are, as if it had been there before. The scenes it creates often appear as scenes remembered. It will sometimes act a dream within a dream, and in the delusion of dreaming tell a dream it never dreamed, and tell it as if it was from memory. It may also be remarked, that the imagination in a dream has no idea of time *as time*. It counts only by circumstances; and if a succession of circumstances pass in a dream that would require a great length of time to accomplish them, it will appear to the dreamer that a length of time equal thereto has passed also.

As this is the state of the mind in dream, it may rationally be said that every person is mad once in every twenty-four hours; for were he to act in the day as he dreams in the night, he would be confined for a lunatic. In a state of wakefulness, those three faculties being all active, and acting in unison, constitute the rational man. In dreams it is otherwise, and therefore, that state which is called insanity

appears to be no other than a disunion of those faculties, and a cessation of the judgment, during wakefulness, that we so often experience during sleep; and *idiotcy*, into which some persons have fallen, is that cessation of all the faculties of which we can be sensible when we happen to wake before our memory.

In this view of the mind, how absurd is it to place reliance upon dreams, and how much more to make them a foundation for religion! yet the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, begotten by the Holy Ghost, a being never heard of before, stands on the story of an old man's dream. 'And behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, in a dream, saying Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.' Matthew, chapter i., verse 20.

After this we have the childish stories of three or four other dreams; about Joseph going into Egypt; about his coming back again; about this, and about that: and this story of dreams has thrown Europe into a dream for more than a thousand years. All the efforts that nature, reason, and conscience, have made to awaken man from it, have been ascribed by priestcraft and superstition to the workings of the devil; and had it not been for the American revolution, which by establishing the *universal right of conscience*, first opened the way to free discussion, and for the French revolution which followed, this religion of dreams had continued to be preached, and that after it had ceased to be believed. Those who preached it and did not believe it, still believed the delusion necessary. They were not bold enough to be honest, nor honest enough to be bold.

Every new religion, like a new play, requires a new apparatus of dress and machinery, to fit the new characters it creates. The story of Christ in the New Testament brings a new being upon the stage, which it calls the Holy Ghost; and the story of Abraham the father of the Jews, in the Old Testament, gives existence to a new order of beings it called angels. There was no Holy Ghost before the time of Christ, nor angels before the time of Abraham. We hear nothing of these winged gentlemen, till more than two thousand years, according to the Bible chronology, from the time they say the heavens, the earth, and all therein were made. After this, they hop about as thick as birds in

a grove. The first we hear of pays his addresses to Hagar in the wildnerness; then three of them visit Sarah; another wrestles a fall with Jacob: and these birds of passage, having found their way to earth and back, are continually coming and going. They eat and drink, and up again to heaven. What they do with the food they carry away in their bellies the Bible does not tell us.

One would think that a system loaded with such gross and vulgar absurdities as Scripture religion is, could never have obtained credit; yet we have seen what priestcraft and fanaticism could do, and credulity believe.

From angels in the Old Testament we get to prophets, to witches, to seers of visions, and dreamers of dreams, and sometimes we are told, as in 1 Samuel, chapter ix., verse 15, that God whispers in the ear. At other times we are not told how the impulse was given, or whether sleeping or waking. In 2 Samuel chapter xxiv., verse 1, it is said, "*And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, Go number Israel and Judah.*" And in 1 Chronicles, chapter xxi., verse 1, when the same story is again related, it is said, "*And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.*"

Whether this was done sleeping or waking we are not told, but it seems that David, whom they call "a man after God's own heart," did not know by what spirit he was moved; and as to the men called inspired penmen, they agree so well about the matter, that in one book they say that it was God, and in the other that it was the devil.

Yet this is the trash the church imposes upon the world as the word of God! this is the collection of lies and contradictions called the Holy Bible! this is the rubbish called revealed religion!

The idea that the writers of the Old Testament had of a God was boisterous, contemptible, and vulgar. They make him the Mars of the Jews, the fighting God of Israel, the conjuring God of their priests and prophets. They still tell us many fables of him as the Greeks told of Hercules.

They put him against Pharaoh, as it were to box with him; and as Moses carries the challenge, they make their God to say, insultingly, "I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." And that he may keep his word, they make him set

a trap in the Red Sea, in the dead of the night, for Pharaoh, his host, and his horses, and drown them as a rat-catcher would do so many rats. Great honor indeed! The story of Jack the Giant-killer is better told.

They match him against the Egyptian magician to conjure with him; and after bad conjuring on both sides (for where there is no great contest, there is no great honor), they bring him off victorious. The three first essays are a dead match; each party turns his rod into a serpent, the rivers into blood, and creates frogs; but upon the fourth, the God of the Israelites obtains the laurel—he covers them all over with lice! The Egyptian magicians cannot do the same, and this lousy triumph proclaims the victory.

They make their God to rain fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and belch fire and smoke upon mount Sinai, as if he were the Pluto of the lower regions. They made him salt up Lot's wife like pickled pork; they make him pass, like Shakespeare's Queen Mab, into the brains of their priests, prophets, and prophetesses, and tickle them into dreams, and after making him play all kind of tricks, they confound him with Satan, and leave us at a loss to know what God they meant.

This is the descriptive God of the Old Testament; and as to the New, though the authors of it have varied the scene, they continued the vulgarity.

Is man ever to be the dupe of priestcraft, the slave of superstition? Is he never to have just ideas of his Creator? It is better not to believe that there is a God, than to believe of him falsely. When we behold the mighty universe that surrounds us, and dart our contemplation into the eternity of space, filled with innumerable orbs, revolving in eternal harmony, how paltry must the tales of the Old and New Testaments, profanely called the word of God, appear to thoughtful man! The stupendous wisdom and unerring order that reign and govern throughout this wondrous whole, and call us to reflection, *put to shame the Bible!* The God of eternity and of all that is real is not the God of passing dreams and shadows of man's imagination! The God of truth is not the God of fable; the belief of a God begotten and a God crucified is a God blasphemed. It is making a profane use of reason.

I shall conclude this Essay on Dreams with the two first

verses of the 34th chapter of Ecclesiasticus, one of the books of the Apocrypha.

Verse 1, "*The hopes of man void of understanding are vain and false! and dreams lift up fools. Whoso regardeth dreams is like him that catches at a shadow, and followeth after the wind.*"

I now proceed to an examination of the passages in the Bible called prophesies of the coming of Christ, and to show there are no prophesies of any such persons; that the passages clandestinely styled prophesies are not prophesies, and that they refer to circumstances the Jewish nation was in at the time they were written or spoken, and not to any distance of future time or person.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Quoted from the Old, and called Prophesies of the coming of Jesus Christ.

THE passages called prophesies of or concerning Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, may be classed under the two following heads:—

First,—Those referred to in the four books of the New Testament called the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Secondly,—Those which Translators and commentators have, of their own imagination, erected into prophesies, and dubbed with that title at the head of the several chapters of the Old Testament. Of these it is scarcely worth while to waste time, ink, and paper upon; I shall, therefore, confine myself chiefly to those referred to in the aforesaid four books of the New Testament. If I show that these are not prophesies of the person called Jesus Christ, nor have reference to any such person, it will be perfectly needless to combat those which translators or the Church have invented, and for which they had no other authority than their own imagination.

I begin with the book called the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

In the first chapter, verse 18, it is said, "Now the birth

of Jesus Christ was in this wise: When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child by the Holy Ghost." This is going a little too fast; because to make this verse agree with the next, it should have said no more than that she was found with child; for the next verse says, "Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not willing to make a public example, was minded to put her away privily." Consequently Joseph had found out no more than that she was with child, and he knew it was not by himself.

Verse 20. "And while he thought on these things (that is, whether he should put her away privily, or make a public example of her) behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him *in a dream* (that is, Joseph dreamed that an angel appeared unto him), saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."

Now, without entering into any discussion upon the merits or demerits of the account here given, it is proper to observe, that it has no higher authority than that of a dream; for it is impossible for a man to behold anything in a dream but that which he dreams of. I ask not, therefore, whether Joseph (if there was such a man) had such a dream or not; because, admitting he had, it proves nothing. So wonderful and irrational is the faculty of the mind in dreams, that it acts the part of all the characters its imagination creates, and what it thinks it hears from any of them is no other than what the roving rapidity of its own imagination invents. It is, therefore, nothing to me what Joseph dreamed of — whether of the fidelity or infidelity of his wife; I pay no regard to my own dreams, and I should be weak indeed to put faith in the dreams of another.

The verses that follow those I have quoted are the words of the writer of the book of Matthew. "Now (says he) all this (that is, all this dreaming and pregnancy), was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, saying,

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us."

This passage is in Isaiah, chapter vii., verse 14, and the writer of the book of Matthew endeavors to make his readers believe that this passage is a prophecy of the person called Jesus Christ. It is no such thing—and I go to show it is not. But it is first necessary that I explain the occasion of these words being spoken by Isaiah; the reader will then easily perceive, that so far from their being a prophesy of Jesus Christ, they have not the least reference to such a person, or to anything that could happen in the time that Christ is said to have lived—which was about seven hundred years after the time of Isaiah. The case is this:—

On the death of Solomon the Jewish nation split into two monarchies; one called the kingdom of Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem; the other the kingdom of Israel, the capital of which was Samaria. The kingdom of Judah followed the line of David, and the kingdom of Israel that of Saul; and these two rival monarchies frequently carried on fierce wars with each other.

At the time Ahaz was king of Judah, which was in the time of Isaiah, Pekah was king of Israel: and Pekah joined himself to Resin, king of Syria, to make war against Ahaz, king of Judah; and these two kings marched a confederated and powerful army against Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people became alarmed at the danger, and "their hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the the wind."—Isaiah, chapter vii., verse 2.

In this perilous situation of things, Isaiah addresses himself to Ahaz, and assures him in the name of the Lord (the cant phrase of all the prophets), that these two kings should not succeed against him; and, to assure him that this should be the case (the case, however, was directly contrary*), tells Ahaz to ask a sign of the Lord. This Ahaz declined doing,

* 2 Chronicles, chap. xxviii., verse 1. Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, but he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord.—Verse 5. Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus: and he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.—Verse 6. And Pekah, king of Israel, slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day.—Verse 8. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren, two hundred thousand women, sons, and daughters.

giving as a reason, that he would not tempt the Lord: upon which Isaiah, who pretends to be sent from God, says (verse 14): "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorest shall be forsaken of both her kings—meaning the king of Israel and the king of Syria, who were marching against him.

Here then is the sign, which was to be the birth of a child, and that child a son; and here also is the time limited for the accomplishment of the sign—namely, before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

The thing, therefore, to be a sign of success to Ahaz, must be something that would take place before the event of the battle then pending between him and the two kings could be known. A thing to be a sign must precede the thing signified. The sign of rain must be before the rain.

It would have been mockery and insulting nonsense for Isaiah to have assured Ahaz, as a sign that these two kings should not prevail against him, that a child should be born seven hundred years after he was dead; and that before the child so born should know to refuse the evil and choose the good, he Ahaz, should be delivered from the danger he was then immediately threatened with.

But the case is, that the child of which Isaiah speaks, was *his own child*, with which his wife or his mistress was then pregnant; for he says in the next chapter, verses 2, 3: "And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son." And he says at verse 18 of the same chapter: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel."

It may not be improper here to observe, that the word translated *a virgin* in Isaiah, does not signify a virgin in Hebrew, but merely *a young woman*. The tense also is falsified in the translation. Levi gives the Hebrew text of the 14th verse of the 7th chapter of Isaiah, and the translation in English with it—"Behold a young woman is with child and beareth a son." The expression, says he, is in the

present tense. The translation agrees with the other circumstances related of the birth of this child, which was to be a sign to Ahaz. But as the true translation could not have been imposed upon the world as the prophesy of a child to be born seven hundred years afterwards, the Christian translators have falsified the original; and instead of making Isaiah to say, Behold, a *young woman* is with child and *beareth* a son—they have made him to say, Behold, a *virgin shall* conceive and *bear* a son. It is, however, only necessary for a person to read the 7th and 8th chapters of Isaiah and he will be convinced that the passage in question is no prophesy of the person called Jesus Christ. I pass on to the second passage quoted from the Old Testament by the New as a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chapter ii., verse 1. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, art not the least among the princes of Judea: for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel." This passage is in Micah, chapter v., verse 2.

I pass over the absurdity of seeing and following a star in the daytime, as a man would with a *Well-with-the-wisp*, or a candle or lanthorn, at night; and also that of seeing it in the east when themselves came from the east; for could such a thing be seen at all to serve them for a guide, it must be in the west to them. I confine myself solely to the passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

The book of Micah, in the passage above quoted, chapter v., verse 2, is speaking of some person, without mentioning his name, from whom some great achievements were expected; but the description he gives of this person at the 5th verse proves evidently that it is not Jesus Christ, for he says at the 5th verse, "And *this man* shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and

when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him (that is, against the Assyrian) seven shepherds, and eight principal men. Verse 6, "And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall *he* (the person spoken of at the head of the second verse) deliver us from the Assyrian when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

This is so evidently descriptive of a military chief, that it cannot be applied to Christ without outraging the character they pretend to give us of him. Besides which, the circumstances of the times here spoken of, and those of the times in which Christ is said to have lived, are in contradiction to each other. It was the Romans, and not the Assyrians, that had conquered and *were in the land* of Judea, and *trod in their palaces* when Christ was born, and when he died; and so far from his driving them out, it was they who signed the warrant for his execution, and he suffered under it.

Having thus shown that this is no prophesy of Jesus Christ, I pass on to the third passage quoted from the Old Testament by the New as a prophecy of him.

This, like the first I have spoken of, is introduced by a dream. Joseph dreameth another dream, and dreameth that he seeth another angel. The account begins at the 13th verse of the 2nd chapter of Matthew:—

'The angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.'

This passage is in the book of Hosea, chapter xi., verse 1. The words are, 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and *called my son out of Egypt.* As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.'

This passage, falsely called a prophesy of Christ, refers to the children of Israel coming out of Egypt in the time

of Pharaoh, and to the idolatry they committed afterwards. To make it apply to Jesus Christ, he, then, must be the person who 'sacrificed unto Baalim and burnt incense to graven images; for the person called out of Egypt by the collective name Israel, and the persons committing this idolatry, are the same persons, or the descendants of them. This, then, can be no prophesy of Jesus Christ unless they are willing to make an idolator of him. I pass on to the fourth passage called a prophesy, by the writer of the book of Matthew.

This is introduced by a story told by nobody but himself, and scarcely believed by anybody, of the slaughter of all the children under two years old, by the command of Herod; a thing which it is not probable could be done by Herod, as he only held an office under the Roman Government, to which appeals could always be had, as we see in the case of Paul.

Matthew, however, having made or told this story, says, chapter ii., verse 17, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, *In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not.*"

This passage is in Jeremiah, chapter xxxi., verse 15; and this verse, when separated from the verses before and after it, and which explains its application, might with equal propriety be applied to every case of wars, sieges, and other violences, such as the Christians themselves have often done to the Jews, where mothers have lamented the loss of their children. There is nothing in the verse taken singly that designates or points out any particular application of it, otherwise than it points to some circumstances which, at the time of writing it, had already happened, and not to a thing yet to happen, for the verse is in the preter or past tense. I go to explain the case, and show the application of the verse.

Jeremiah lived in the time that Nebuchadnezzar besieged, took, plundered, and destroyed Jerusalem, and led the Jews captive to Babylon. He carried his violence against the Jews to every extreme. He slew the sons of King Zedekiah before his face; he then put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and kept him in prison till the day of his death.

It is of this time of sorrow and suffering to the Jews that

Jeremiah is speaking. Their temple was destroyed, their land desolated, their nation and government entirely broken up, and themselves, men, women, and children, carried into captivity. They had too many sorrows of their own, immediately before their eyes, to permit them, or any of their chiefs, to be employing themselves on things that might, or might not, happen in the world seven hundred years afterwards.

It is, as already observed, of this time of sorrow and suffering to the Jews that Jeremiah is speaking in the verse in question. In the two next verses, the 16th and 17th, he endeavors to console the sufferers by giving them hopes, and, according to the fashion of speaking in those days, assurances from the Lord that their sufferings shall have an end, and that their children should return again to their own land. But I leave the verses to speak for themselves, and the Old Testament to testify against the New.

Jeremiah, chapter xxxi., verse 15—"Thus saith the Lord, a voice was heard in Ramah (it is in the preter tense), lamentation and bitter weeping: Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not."

Verse 16—"Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy."

Verse 17—"And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, *and* thy children shall come again to their own border."

By what strange ignorance or imposition is it, that the children of which Jeremiah speaks (meaning the people of the Jewish nation, scripturally called children of Israel, and not mere infants under two years old), and who were to return again from the land of the enemy, and come again into their own borders, can mean the children that Matthew makes Herod to slaughter? Could those return again from the land of the enemy, or how can the land of the enemy be applied to them? Could they come again to their own borders? Good heavens! how has the world been imposed upon by Testament-makers, priestcraft, and pretended prophesies! I pass on to the fifth passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

This, like two of the former, is introduced by a dream.

Joseph dreamed another dream, and dreameth of another angel. And Matthew is again the historian of the dream and the dreamer. If it were asked how Matthew could know what Joseph dreamed, neither the Bishop nor all the Church could answer the question. Perhaps it was Matthew that dreamed and not Joseph; that is, Joseph dreamed by proxy, in Matthew's brain, as they tell us Daniel dreamed for Nebuchadnezzar. But be this as it may, I go on with my subject.

The account of this dream is in Matthew, chapter ii., verses 19 to 23—"But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream (here is another dream), he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene."

Here is good circumstantial evidence that Matthew dreamed, for there is no such passage in the Old Testament; and I invite the Bishops and all the priests in Christendom, including those of America, to produce it. I pass on to the sixth passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

This, as Swift says on another occasion, is *lugged in head and shoulders;* it needs only to be seen in order to be hooted as a forced and far-fetched piece of imposition.

Matthew, chapter iv., verse 12—"Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulun and Nepthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulun and the land of Nepthalim, *by the way* of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

I wonder Matthew has not made the cris-cross-row, or

the Christ-cross-now (I know not how the priests spell it) into a prophesy. He might as well have done this as cut out these unconnected and undescriptive sentences from the place they stand in, and dubbed them with that title.

The words, however, are in Isaiah, chapter ix., verses 1 and 2, as follows:—

"Nevertheless, the dimness *shall* not *be* such as *was* in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict *her by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations."

All this relates to two circumstances that had already happened at the time these words in Isaiah were written. The one, where the land of Zebulun and Naphtali had been lightly afflicted, and afterwards more grievously, by the way of the sea.

But, observe, reader, how Matthew has falsified the text. He begins his quotation at a part of the verse, where there is not so much as a comma, and thereby cuts off everything that relates to the first affliction. He then leaves out all that relates to the second affliction, and by this means leaves out everything that makes the verse intelligible, and reduces it to a senseless skeleton of names of towns.

To bring this imposition of Matthew clearly and immediately before the eye of the reader, I will repeat the verse, and put between brackets [ ] the words he has left out, and put in *italics* those he has preserved.

[Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation when at first he lightly afflicted] *the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali*, [and did afterwards more grievously afflict her] *by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.*

What gross imposition is it to gut, as the phrase is, a verse in this manner, render it perfectly senseless, and then puff it off on a credulous world as a prophesy! I proceed to the next verse.

Verse 2—"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." All this is historical and not in the least prophetical. The whole is in the preter-tense; it speaks of things that *had been accomplished*

at the time the words were written, and not of things to be accomplished afterwards.

As, then, the passage is in no possible sense prophetical, nor intended to be so, and that to attempt to make it so, is not only to falsify the original, but to commit a criminal imposition; it is a matter of no concern to us, otherwise than as curiosity, to know who the people were of which the passage speaks, that sat in darkness, and what the light was that had shined in upon them.

If we look into the preceding chapter, the 8th, of which the 9th is only a continuation, we shall find the writer speaking, at the 19th verse, of *witches and wizards who peep about and mutter*, and of people who made application to them; and he preaches and exhorts them against this darksome practice. It is of this people, and of this darksome practice, or *walking in darkness*, that he is speaking at the second verse of the 9th chapter; and with respect to *the light that had shined in upon them*, it refers entirely to his own ministry, and to the boldness of it, which opposed itself to that of the witches and wizards who peeped about and muttered.

Isaiah is, upon the whole, a wild, disorderly writer, preserving in general no clear chain of perception in the arrangement of his ideas, and consequently producing no defined conclusion from them. It is the wildness of his style, the confusion of his ideas, and the ranting metaphors he employs, that have afforded so many opportunities to priestcraft in some cases, and to superstition in others, to impose these defects upon the world as prophesies of Jesus Christ. Finding no direct meaning in them, and not knowing what to make of them, and supposing at the same time they were intended to have a meaning, they supplied the defect by inventing a meaning of their own, and called it his. I have, however, in this place done Isaiah the justice to rescue him from the claws of Matthew, who has torn him unmercifully to pieces, and from the imposition or ignorance of priests and commentators, by letting Isaiah speak for himself.

If the words *walking in darkness*, and *light breaking in*, could in any case be applied prophetically, which they cannot be, they would better apply to the times we now live in than to any other. The world has *walked in darkness* for eighteen hundred years, both as to religion and government, and it is

only since the American Revolution began that light has broken in. The belief of *one God*, whose attributes are revealed to us in the book or scripture of the creation, which no human hand can counterfeit or falsify, and not in the written or printed book which, as Matthew has shown, can be altered or falsified by ignorance or design, is now making its way among us: and as to government, *the light is already gone forth;* and whilst men ought to be careful not to be blinded by the excess of it, as at a certain time in France, when everything was Robespierrean violence, they ought to reverence, and even to adore it, with all the firmness and perseverance that true wisdom can inspire.

I pass on to the seventh passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chapter viii., verse 16,—"When the evening was come, they brought unto him (Jesus) many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

This affair of people being possessed with devils, and of casting them out, was the fable of the day when the books of the New Testament were written. It had not existence at any other time. The books of the Old Testament mention no such thing; the people of the present day know of no such thing; nor does the history of any people or country speak of such a thing. It starts upon us all at once in the book of Matthew, and is altogether an invention of the New Testament makers and the Christian church. The book of Matthew is the first book where the word *devil* is mentioned as being in the singular number.* We read in some of the books of the Old Testament of things called familiar spirits, the supposed companions of people called witches and wizards. It was no other than the trick of pretended conjurors to obtain money from credulous and ignorant people, or the fabricated charge of superstitious malignancy against unfortunate and decrepid old age.

But the idea of a familiar spirit, if we can affix any idea to the term, is exceedingly different to that of being possessed by a devil. In the one case the supposed familiar

* The word Devil is a personification of the word evil.

spirit is a dexterous agent, that comes and goes, and does as he is bidden; in the other, he is a turbulent roaring monster, that tears and tortures the body into convulsions. Reader, whoever thou art, put thy trust in thy Creator, make use of the reason he endowed thee with, and cast from thee all such fables.

The passage alluded to by Matthew, for as a quotation it is false, is in Isaiah, chapter liii., verse 4, which is as follows:—

"Surely he (the person of whom Isaiah is speaking) hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." It is in the preter-tense.

Here is nothing about casting out devils, nor curing of sicknesses. The passage, therefore, so far from being a prophesy of Christ, is not even applicable as a circumstance.

Isaiah, or at least the writer of the book that bears his name, employs the whole of this chapter, the 53rd, in lamenting the sufferings of some deceased person, of whom he speaks very pathetically. It is a monody on the death of a friend; but he mentions not the name of the person, nor gives any circumstance of him by which he can be personally known; and it is this silence, which is evidence of nothing, that Matthew has laid hold of to put the name of Christ to it; as if the chiefs of the Jews, whose sorrows were then great, and the times they lived in big with danger, were never thinking about their own affairs, nor the fate of their own friends, but were continually running a wild-goose chase into futurity.

To make a monody into a prophesy is an absurdity. The characters and circumstances of men, even in different ages of the world, are so much alike, that what is said of one may with propriety be said of many; but this fitness does not make the passage into a prophesy: and none but an impostor or a bigot would call it so.

Isaiah in deploring the hard fate and loss of his friend, mentions nothing of him but what the human lot of man is subject to. All the cases he states of him—his persecutions, his imprisonment, his patience in suffering, and his perseverance in principle, are all within the line of nature; they belong exclusively to none, and may with justness be said of many. But if Jesus Christ was the person the church represents him to be, that which would exclusively

apply to him must be something that could not apply to any other person; something beyond the line of nature; something beyond the lot of mortal man; and there are no such expressions in this chapter, nor any other chapter in the Old Testament.

It is no exclusive description to say of a person, as is said of the person Isaiah is lamenting in this chapter. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." This may be said of thousands of persons who have suffered oppressions and unjust death with patience, silence, and perfect resignation.

Grotius, whom the bishop esteems a most learned man, and who certainly was so, supposes that the person of whom Isaiah is speaking is Jeremiah. Grotius is led into this opinion, from the agreement there is between the description given by Isaiah, and the case of Jeremiah, as stated in the book that bears his name. If Jeremiah was an innocent man, and not a traitor in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar, when Jerusalem was besieged, his case was hard; he was accused by his countrymen, was persecuted, oppressed, and imprisoned, and he says of himself (see Jeremiah, chapter xi., verse 19), "But as for me, I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter."

I should be inclined to the same opinion with Grotius, had Isaiah lived at the time when Jeremiah underwent the cruelties of which he speaks; but Isaiah died about fifty years before: and it is of a person of his own time, whose case Isaiah is lamenting in the chapter in question, and which imposition and bigotry, more than seven hundred years afterwards, perverted into a prophesy of a person they call Jesus Christ.

I pass on to the eighth passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chapter xii., verse 14—"Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence; and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all: and charged them that they should not make him known. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah), the prophet, saying,

"Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

In the first place, this passage hath not the least relation to the purpose for which it is quoted.

Matthew says that the Pharisees held a council against Jesus to destroy him—that Jesus withdrew himself—that great numbers followed him—that he healed them—and that he charged them they should not make him known.

But the passage Matthew has quoted as being fulfilled by these circumstances, does not so much as apply to any one of them. It has nothing to do with the Pharisees holding a council to destroy Jesus—with his withdrawing himself—with great numbers following him—with his healing them—nor with his charging them not to make him known.

The purpose for which the passage is quoted, and the passage itself, are as remote from each other as nothing from something. But the case is, that people have been so long in the habit of reading the books called the Bible and Testament, with their eyes shut, and their senses locked up, that the most stupid inconsistencies have passed on them for truth, and imposition for prophesy. The all-wise Creator hath been dishonored by being made the author of fable, and the human mind degraded by believing it.

In this passage, as in that last mentioned, the name of the person of whom the passage speaks is not given, and we are left in the dark respecting him. It is this defect in the history that bigotry and imposition have laid hold of to call it prophesy.

Had Isaiah lived in the time of Cyrus, the passage would descriptively apply to him. As king of Persia, his authority was great among the Gentiles, and it is of such a character the passage speaks; and his friendship to the Jews, whom he liberated from captivity, and who might then be compared to a *bruised reed*, was extensive. But this description does not apply to Jesus Christ, who had no authority among the Gentiles; and as to his own countrymen, figuratively described by the bruised reed, it was they

who crucified him. Neither can it be said of him that he did not cry, and that his voice was not heard in the street. As a preacher it was his business to be heard, and we are told that he travelled about the country for that purpose. Matthew has given a long sermon, which (if his authority is good, but which is much to be doubted, since he imposes so much) Jesus preached to a multitude upon a mountain; and it would be a quibble to say that a mountain is not a street, since it is a place equally as public.

The last verse in the passage (the 4th) as it stands in Isaiah and which Matthew has not quoted, says, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." This also applies to Cyrus. He was not discouraged, he did not fail, he conquered all Babylon, liberated the Jews, and established laws. But this cannot be said of Jesus Christ, who, in the passage before us, according to Matthew, withdrew himself for fear of the Pharisees, and charged the people that followed him not to make it known where he was; and who, according to other parts of the Testament, was continually moving about from place to place to avoid being apprehended.*

* In the second part of the "Age of Reason," I have shown that the book ascribed to Isaiah is not only miscellaneous as to matter, but as to authorship; that there are parts in it which could not be written by Isaiah, because they speak of things one hundred and fifty years after he was dead. The instance I have given of this, in that work, corresponds with the subject I am upon, at least a little better than Matthew's introduction and his quotation.

Isaiah lived, the latter part of his life, in the time of Hezekiah, and it was about one hundred and fifty years from the death of Hezekiah to the first year of the reign of Cyrus, when Cyrus published a proclamation, which is given in the first chapter of the book of Ezra, for the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. It cannot be doubted, at least it ought not to be doubted, that the Jews would feel an affectionate gratitude for this act of benevolent justice; and it is natural that they would express that gratitude in the customary style, bombastical and hyperbolical as it was, which they used on extraordinary occasions, and which was, and still is, in practice with all the eastern nations.

The instance to which I refer, and which is given in the second part of the "Age of Reason," is the last verse of the 44th chapter, and the beginning of the 45th, in those words: "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have

But it is immaterial to us, at this distance of time, to know who the person was: it is sufficient to the purpose I am upon, that of detecting fraud and falsehood, to know it was not, and to show it was not the person called Jesus Christ.

I pass on to the ninth passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chapter xxi., verse 1, "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied and a colt with her; *loose them*, and bring them unto me. And if any *man* say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

"All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

Poor ass! let it be some consolation amidst all thy sufferings, that if the heathen world erected a bear into a constellation, the Christian world has elevated thee into a prophesy.

This passage is in Zechariah, chapter ix., verse 9, and is one of the whims of friend Zechariah to congratulate his countrymen, who were then returning from captivity in

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holden, to subdue nations before him: and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut."

This complimentary address is in the present tense, which shows that the things of which Isaiah speaks were in existence at the time of writing it; and, consequently, that the author must have been at least one hundred and fifty years later than Isaiah, and that the book which bears his name is a compilation. The Proverbs called Solomon's, and the Psalms called David's, are of the same kind. The two last verses of the second book of Chronicles and three first verses of the chapter of Ezra are word for word the same; which show that the compilers of the Bible mixed the writings of different authors together, and put them under some common head.

As we have here an instance, in the 44th and 45th chapters, of the introduction of the name of Cyrus into a book to which it cannot belong, it affords good ground to conclude that the passage in the 42nd chapter, in which the character of Cyrus is given without his name, has been introduced in like manner, and that the person there spoken of is Cyrus.

Babylon, and himself with them, to Jerusalem. It has no concern with any other subject. It is strange that apostles, priests, and commentators never permit, or never suppose the Jews to be speaking of their own affairs. Everything in the Jewish books is perverted and distorted into meanings never intended by the writers. Even the poor ass must not be a Jew-ass, but a Christian-ass. I wonder they did not make an apostle of him, or a bishop, or at least make him speak and prophesy. He could have lifted up his voice as loud as any of them.

Zechariah, in the first chapter of his book, indulges himself in several whims on the joy of getting back to Jerusalem. He says, at the 8th verse, "I saw by night (Zechariah was a sharp-sighted seer), and behold a man riding on a *red horse* (yes, reader, a *red horse*), and he stood among the myrtle trees that *were* in the bottom; and behind him *were red horses, speckled, and white.*" He says nothing about green horses, nor blue horses, perhaps because it is difficult to distinguish green from blue by night, but a Christian can have no doubt they were there, because "*faith is the evidence of things not seen.*"

Zechariah then introduces an angel among his horses, but he does not tell us what color the angel was of, whether black or white; whether he came to buy horses, or only to look at them as curiosities, for certainly they were of that kind. Be this, however, as it may, he enters into conversation with this angel, on the joyful affair of getting back to Jerusalem, and he saith at the 16th verse—

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord; I AM RETURNED to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem." An expression signifying the rebuilding of the city.

All this, whimsical and imaginary as it is, sufficiently proves that it was the entry of the Jews into Jerusalem from captivity, and not the entry of Jesus Christ seven hundred years afterwards, that is the subject upon which Zechariah is always speaking.

As to the expression of riding upon an ass, which commentators represent as a sign of humility in Jesus Christ, the case is, he never was so well mounted before. The asses of those countries are large and well proportioned, and were

anciently the chief of riding animals. Their beasts of burden, and which served also for the conveyance of the poor, were camels and dromedaries. We read in Judges, chapter x., verse 4, that "Jair (one of the judges of Israel), had thirty sons that rode on *thirty ass-colts*, and they had thirty cities." But commentators distort everything.

There is besides very reasonable grounds to conclude, that this story of Jesus riding publicly into Jerusalem accompanied as it is said in Matthew, chapter xxi., 8th and 9th verses, by a great multitude, shouting and rejoicing, and spreading their garments by the way, is altogether a story destitute of truth.

In the last passage called a prophesy that I examined, Jesus is represented as withdrawing, that is, running away, and concealing himself for fear of being apprehended, and charging the people that were with him not to make him known. No new circumstances had arisen in the interim to change his condition for the better; yet here he is represented as making his public entry into the same city from which he fled for safety. The two cases contradict each other so much, that if both are not false, one of them at least can scarcely be true. For my own part, I do not believe there is one word of historical truth in the whole book. I look upon it at best to be a romance; the principal personage of which is an imaginary or allegorical character, founded upon some tale, and in which the moral is in many parts good, and the narrative part very badly and blunderingly written.

I pass on to the tenth passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chapter xxvi., verse 51, "And behold one of them which were with Jesus (meaning Peter), stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no

hold on me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

This loose and general manner of speaking admits neither of detection nor of proof. Here is no quotation given, nor the name of any Bible author mentioned, to which reference can be had.

There are, however, some high improbabilities against the truth of the account.

First—It is not probable that the Jews, who were then a conquered people and under subjection to the Romans, should be permitted to wear swords.

Secondly—If Peter had attacked the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear, he would have been immediately taken up by the guard that took up his master, and sent to prison with him.

Thirdly—What sort of disciples and preaching apostles must those of Christ have been that wore swords?

Fourthly—The scene is represented to have taken place the same evening of what is called the Lord's Supper, which makes, according to the ceremony of it, the inconsistency of wearing swords the greater.

I pass on to the eleventh passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chapter xxvii., verse 3, "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what *is that* to us? see thou *to that*. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, it is not lawful for to put them into the treasury because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called the field of blood unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

This is a most bare-faced piece of imposition. The passage in Jeremiah which speaks of the purchase of a field, has

no more to do with the case to which Matthew applies it, than it has to do with the purchase of lands in America. I will recite the whole passage:

Jeremiah, chapter xxxii., verse 6, "And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Behold Hanameel the son of Shallum, thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that *is* in Anathoth: for the right of redemption *is* thine to buy *it*. So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that *is* in Anathoth, which *is* in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this *was* the word of the Lord. And I bought the field of Hanameel mine uncle's son, that *was* in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, *even* seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed *it*, and took witnesses, and weighed *him* the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, *both* that which was seal *according* to the law and custom, and that which was open; and I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch, the son of Neriah the son of Masseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison—and I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; take those evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days—for thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.'

I forbear making any remark on this abominable imposition of Matthew. The thing glaringly speaks for itself. It is priests and commentators that I rather ought to censure, for having preached falsehood so long, and kept people in darkness with respect to those impositions. I am not contending with these men upon points of doctrine, for I know that sophistry has always a city of refuge. I am speaking of facts; for wherever a thing called a fact is a falsehood, the faith founded upon it is delusion, and the doctrine raised upon it not true. Ah, reader, put thy trust in thy Creator,

and thou wilt be safe; but if thou trustest to the book called the Scriptures, thou trustest to the rotten staff of fable and falsehood. But I return to my subject.

There is, among the whims and reveries of Zechariah, mention made of thirty pieces of silver given to a potter. They can hardly have been so stupid as to mistake a potter for a field; and if they had, the passage in Zechariah has no more to do with Jesus, Judas, and the field to bury strangers in, than that already quoted. I will recite the passage.

Zechariah, chapter xi., verse 7: "And I will feed the flock of slaughter, *even* you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called *Beauty*, and the other I called *Bands*, and I fed the flock. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their souls also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you; that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat everyone the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even *Beauty*, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it *was* the word of the Lord.

"And I said unto them, if ye think good give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver. And the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty *pieces* of silver, and cast them unto the potter in the house of the Lord.

"Then I cast asunder mine other staff even *Bands*, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel."*

* Whiston, in his Essay on the Old Testament, says that the passage of Zechariah, of which I have spoken, was, in the copies of the Bible of the first century, in the book of Jeremiah, from whence, says he, it was taken and inserted without coherence, in that of Zechariah. Well, let it be so, it does not make the case a whit the better for the New Testament: but it makes the case a great deal the worse for the Old. Because it shows, as I have mentioned respecting some passages in a book ascribed to Isaiah, that the works of different authors have been so mixed and confounded together, they cannot now be discriminated, except where they are historical, chronological, or biographical, as is the interpolation in Isaiah. It is the name of Cyrus, inserted where it could not be inserted, as he was not in existence till 150 years after

There is no making either head or tail of this incoherent gibberish. His two staves, one called *Beauty* and the other *Bands*, is so much like a fairy tale, that I doubt if it had any other origin. There is, however, no part that has the least relation to the case stated in Matthew; on the contrary, it is the reverse of it. Here the *thirty pieces* of silver, whatever it was for, is called a *goodly price;* it was as much as the thing was worth, and according to the language of the day, was approved of by the Lord, and the money given to the potter in the house of the Lord. In the case of Jesus and Judas as stated in Matthew, the thirty pieces of silver were the price of blood; the transaction was condemned by the Lord, and the money, when refunded, was refused admittance into the treasury. Everything in the two cases is the reverse of each other.

Besides this, a very different and direct contrary account to that of Matthew is given of the affair of Judas, in the book called the *Acts of the Apostles*. According to that book the case is, that so far from Judas repenting and returning the money, and the high priest buying a field with it to bury strangers in, Judas kept the money and bought a field with it for himself; and instead of hanging himself as Matthew says, that he fell headlong and burst asunder.

Some commentators endeavor to get over one part of the

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the time of Isaiah, that detects the interpolation and the blunder with it.

Whiston was a man of great literary learning, and, what is of much higher degree, of deep scientific learning. He was one of the best and most celebrated mathematicians of his time, for which he was made Professor of Mathematics of the University of Cambridge. He wrote so much in defence of the Old Testament, and of what he calls prophecies of Jesus Christ, that at last he began to suspect the truth of the Scriptures and wrote against them; for it is only those who examine them, that see the imposition. Those who believe them most are those who know least about them.

Whiston, after writing so much in defence of the Scriptures, was at last prosecuted for writing against them. It was this that gave occasion to Swift, in his ludicrous epigram on Ditton and Whiston, each of which set up to find out the longitude, to call one good master Ditton, and the other wicked Will Whiston. But as Swift was a great associate with the Freethinkers of those days, such as Bolingbroke, Pope, and others, who did not believe the books called the Scriptures, there is no certainty whether he wittily called him wicked for defending the Scriptures, or for writing against them. The known character of Swift decides for the former.

contradiction by ridiculously supposing that Judas hanged himself first and the rope broke.

Acts, chapter i., verse 16: "Men *and* brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was a guide to them that took Jesus. (David says not a word about Judas); verse 17, for he (Judas) was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry."

Verse 18: "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and his bowels gushed out." Is it not a species of blasphemy to call the New Testament *revealed religion*, when we see in it such contradictions and absurdities.

I pass on to the twelfth passage called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chapter xxvii., verse 35: "And they crucified him and parted his garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." This expression is in the 22nd Psalm, verse 18. The writer of that Psalm (whoever he was, for the Psalms are a collection, and not the work of one man) is speaking of himself and of his own case, and not that of another. He begins this Psalm with the words which the New Testament writers ascribed to Jesus Christ—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—words which might be uttered by a complaining man without any great impropriety, but very improperly from the mouth of a reputed God.

The picture which the writer draws of his own situation, in this Psalm is gloomy enough. He is not prophesying but complaining of his own hard case. He represents himself as surrounded by enemies and beset by persecutions of every kind; and by way of showing the inveteracy of his persecutors, he says, at the 18th verse, "They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

The expression is in the present tense; and is the same as to say, They pursue me to the clothes upon my back, and dispute how they shall divide them. Besides, the word *vesture* does not always mean clothing of any kind, but *property*, or rather the admitting a man to or *investing* him with property; and as it is used in this Psalm distinct from the word garment, it appears to be used in this sense. But

Jesus had no property; for they make him say of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

But be this as it may, if we permit ourselves to suppose the Almighty would condescend to tell, by what is called the spirit of prophesy, what could come to pass in some future age of the world, it is an injury to our own faculties, and to our ideas of his greatness, to imagine it would be about an old coat, or an old pair of breeches, or about anything which the common accidents of life, or the quarrels that attend it, exhibit every day.

That which is within the power of man to do, or in his will not to do, is not a subject for prophesy even if there were such a thing, because it cannot carry with it any evidence of divine power or divine interposition. The ways of God are not the ways of men. That which an Almighty power performs or wills, is not within the circle of human power to do or to control. But any executioner and his assistants might quarrel about dividing the garments of a sufferer, or divide them without quarrelling, and by that means fulfil the thing called a prophesy, or set it aside.

In the passages before examined, I have exposed the falsehood of them. In this I exhibit its degrading meanness, as an insult to the Creator, and an injury to human reason.

Here end the passages called prophesies by Matthew.

Matthew concludes his book by saying, that when Christ expired on the cross, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the bodies of many of the saints arose; and Mark says, there was darkness over the land from the sixth hour until the ninth. They produce no prophesy for this; but had these things been facts, they would have been a proper subject for prophesy, because none but an Almighty power could have inspired a foreknowledge of them, and afterwards fulfilled them. Since, then, there is no such prophesy, but a pretended prophesy of an old coat, the proper deduction is, there were no such things, and that the book of Matthew is fable and falsehood.

I pass on to the book called the Gospel according to St. Mark.

THE BOOK OF MARK.

There are but few passages in Mark called prophesies; and but few in Luke and John. Such as there are I shall examine, and also such other passages as interfere with those cited by Matthew.

Mark begins his book by a passage which he puts into the shape of a prophesy, Mark, chapter i., verse 1. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." (Malachi, chapter iii., verse 1.) The passage in the original is in the first person. Mark makes this passage to be a prophesy of John the Baptist, said by the Church to be a forerunner of Jesus Christ. But if we attend to the verses that follow this expression, as it stands in Malachi, and to the first and fifth verses of the next chapter, we shall see that this application of it is erroneous and false.

Malachi having said at the first verse, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me," says at the second verse, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap."

This description can have no reference to the birth of Jesus Christ, and consequently none to John the Baptist. It is a scene of fear and terror that is here described, and the birth of Christ is always spoken of as a time of joy and glad tidings.

Malachi, continuing to speak on the same subject, explains in the next chapter what the scene is of which he speaks in the verses above quoted, and who the person is whom he calls the messenger.

"Behold," says he, chapter iv., verse 1, "the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

Verse 5, "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

By what right, or by what imposition or ignorance, Mark has made Elijah into John the Baptist, and Malachi's

description of the day of judgment into the birthday of Christ, I leave the Bishop to settle.

Mark, in the second and third verses of his first chapter, confounds two passages together, taken from different books of the Old Testament. The second verse, "*Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee,*" is taken, as I have said before, from Malachi. The third verse, which says, "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,*" is not in Malachi, but in Isaiah, chapter xl., verse 3. Whiston says, that both these verses were originally in Isaiah. If so, it is another instance of the disordered state of the Bible, and corroborates what I have said with respect to the name and description of Cyrus being in the book of Isaiah, to which it cannot chronologically belong.

The words in Isaiah, chapter xi., verse 3, *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*, are in the present tense, and consequently not predictive. It is one of those rhetorical figures which the Old Testament authors frequently used. That it is merely rhetorical and metaphorical, may be seen at the 6th verse: "And the voice said, Cry; and he said, What shall I cry? *All flesh is grass.*" This is evidently nothing but a figure; for flesh is not grass, otherwise than a figure; or metaphor, where one thing is put for another, Besides which, the whole passage is too general and declamatory to be applied exclusively to any particular person or purpose.

I pass on to the eleventh chapter.

In this chapter Mark speaks of Christ riding into Jerusalem upon a colt, but he does not make it the accomplishment of a prophesy, as Matthew has done; for he says nothing about a prophesy. Instead of which, he goes on the other tack, and in order to add new honors to the ass, he makes it to be a miracle; for he says, verse 2, it was *a colt, whereon never man sat;* signifying thereby, that as the ass had not been broken, he consequently was inspired *into good manners*, for we do not hear that he kicked Jesus Christ off. There is not a word about his kicking in all the four Evangelists.

I pass on from these feats of *horsemanship*, performed upon a jackass, to the 15th chapter.

At the 24th verse of this chapter, Mark speaks of *parting*

Christ's garments and casting lots upon them, but he applies no prophesy to it as Matthew does. He rather speaks of it as a thing then in practice with executioners, as it is at this day.

At the 28th verse of the same chapter, Mark speaks of Christ being crucified between two thieves: that, says he, *The Scriptures might be fulfilled which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.* The same thing might be said of the thieves. The expression is in Isaiah, chapter liii., verse 12. Grotius applies it to Jeremiah. But the case has happened so often in the world, where innocent men have been numbered with transgressors, and is still continually happening, that it is absurdity to call it a prophesy of any particular person. All those whom the church calls martyrs were numbered with transgressors. All the honest patriots who fell upon the scaffold in France, in the time of Robespierre, were numbered with transgressors; and if he himself had not fallen, the same case, according to a note in his own hand-writing, had befallen me; yet I suppose the bishop will not allow that Isaiah was prophesying of Thomas Paine.

These are all the passages in Mark which have any reference to prophecies.

Mark concludes his book by making Jesus to say to his disciples, chapter xvi., verse 15, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (fine Popish stuff this). And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents: and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Now the bishop, in order to know if he has all this saving and wonder-working faith, should try those things upon himself. He should take a good dose of arsenic, and, if he please, I will send him a rattle-snake from America! As for myself, as I believe in God, and not at all in Jesus Christ, nor in the books called the Scriptures, the experiment does not concern me.

I pass on to the book of Luke.

THE BOOK OF LUKE.

There are no passages in Luke called prophecies, excepting those which relate to the passages I have already examined.

Luke speaks of Mary being espoused to Joseph, but he makes no reference to the passages in Isaiah, as Matthew does. He also speaks of Jesus riding into Jerusalem upon a colt, but he says nothing about a prophesy. He speaks of John the Baptist, and refers to the passage in Isaiah of which I have already spoken.

At the 13th chapter, verse 31, he says "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him (Jesus), Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."

Matthew makes Herod to die whilst Christ was a child in Egypt, and makes Joseph to return with the child on the news of Herod's death, who had sought to kill him. Luke makes Herod to be living and to seek the life of Jesus after Jesus was thirty years of age; for he says, chapter iii., verse 23, "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph."

The obscurity in which the historical part of the New Testament is involved with some respect to Herod, may afford to priests and commentators a plea, which to some may appear plausible, but to none satisfactory, that the Herod of which Matthew speaks, and the Herod of which Luke speaks, were different persons. Matthew calls Herod a king; and Luke, chapter iii., verse 1, calls Herod tetrarch (that is, governor) of Galilee. But there could be no such person as a *King Herod*, because the Jews and their country were then under the dominion of the Roman emperors, who governed them by tetrarchs or governors.

Luke, chapter ii., makes Jesus to be born when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, to which government Judea was annexed; and according to this, Jesus was not born in the time of Herod. Luke says nothing about Herod seeking the life of Jesus when he was born; nor of his destroying the children under two years old; nor of Joseph fleeing with Jesus into Egypt; nor of his returning from thence.

On the contrary, the book of Luke speaks as if the person it calls Christ, had never been out of Judea, and that Herod sought his life after he commenced preaching, as is before stated. I have already shown that Luke, in the book called the Acts of the Apostles (which commentators ascribe to Luke), contradicts the account in Matthew, with respect to Judas and the thirty pieces of silver. Matthew says, that Judas returned the money, and that the high priests bought with it a field to bury strangers in. Luke says, that Judas kept the money, and bought a field with it for himself.

As it is impossible the wisdom of God should err, so it is impossible those books could have been written by divine inspiration. Our belief in God and his unerring wisdom forbids us to believe it. As for myself, I feel religiously happy in the total disbelief of it.

There are no other passages called prophecies in Luke than those I have spoken of. I pass on to the book of John.

THE BOOK OF JOHN.

John, like Mark and Luke, is not much of a prophesy-monger. He speaks of the ass, and the casting lots for Jesus's clothes, and some other trifles, of which I have already spoken.

John makes Jesus to say, chapter v., verse 46, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." The book of the Acts, in speaking of Jesus, says, chapter iii., verse 22, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."

This passage is in Deuteronomy, chapter xviii., verse 15. They apply it as a prophesy of Jesus. What impositions! The person spoken of in Deuteronomy, and also in Numbers where the same person is spoken of, is *Joshua*, the minister of Moses, and his immediate successor, and just such another Robespierrean character as Moses is represented to have been. The case, as related in those books, is as follows:—

Moses was grown old and near to his end; and in order to prevent confusion after his death, for the Israelites had no settled system of government, it was thought best to nominate a successor to Moses while he was yet living. This was done, as we are told, in the following manner:

Numbers, chapter xxvii., verse 12, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron, thy brother, was gathered." Verse 15, "And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put *some* of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient." Verse 22, "And Moses did as the Lord commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation, and he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses."

I have nothing to do, in this place, with the truth or the conjuration here practised, of raising up a successor to Moses like unto himself. The passage sufficiently proves it is Joshua and that it is an imposition in John to make the case into a prophesy of Jesus. But the prophesy-mongers were so inspired with falsehood that they never speak truth."*

* Newton, Bishop of Bristol, in England, published a work in three volumes, entitled "Dissertations on the Prophesies." The work is tediously written and tiresome to read. He strains hard to make every passage into a prophesy that suits his purpose. Among others, he makes this expression of Moses, "The Lord shall raise thee up a prophet like unto me," into a prophesy of Christ, who was not born, according to the Bible chronologies, till fifteen hundred and fifty-two years after the time of Moses, whereas it was an immediate successor to Moses, who was then near his end, that is spoken of in the passage above quoted.

This bishop, the better to impose this passage on the world as a prophesy of Christ, has entirely omitted the account in the book of Numbers which I have given at length word for word, and which shows, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the person spoken of by Moses is Joshua, and no other person.

Newton is but a superficial writer. He takes up things upon hear-

I pass on to the last passage in these fables of the Evangelists, called a prophesy of Jesus Christ.

John having spoken of Jesus expiring on the cross between two thieves, says, chapter xiv., verse 32: "Then came the soldiers and break the legs of the first (meaning one of the thieves) and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they break not his legs (verse 36), for these things were done that the Scriptures should be fulfilled, *A bone of him shall not be broken.*"

The passage here referred to is in Exodus, and has no more to do with Jesus than the ass he rode upon to Jerusalem; nor yet so much, if a roasted jackass, like a roasted he-goat, might be eaten at a Jewish passover. It might be some consolation to an ass to know, that though his bones might be picked they would not be broken. I go to state the case.

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say, and inserts them without examination or reflection, and the more extraordinary and incredible they are the better he likes them.

In speaking of the walls of Babylon (volume the first, page 263), he makes a quotation from a traveller of the name of Tavernier, whom he calls (by way of giving credit to what he says) a celebrated traveller, that those walls were made of burnt brick, ten feet square and three feet thick. If Newton had only thought of calculating the weight of such a brick, he would have seen the impossibility of their being used or even made. A brick ten feet square, and three feet thick, contains 300 cubic feet; and allowing a cubic foot of brick to be only one hundred pounds, each of the bishop's bricks would weigh thirty thousand pounds; and it would take about thirty cart loads of clay (one-horse carts) to make one brick.

But this account of the stones used in the building of Solomon's temple (vol. ii., page 211), far exceeds his bricks of ten feet square in the walls of Babylon; these are but brick-bats compared to them.

The stones (says he) employed in the foundation, were in magnitude forty cubits, that is above sixty feet, a cubit (says he), being somewhat more than one foot and a half (a cubit is one foot nine inches), and the superstructure (says the bishop) was worthy of such foundations. There are some stones, says he, of the whitest marble, forty-five cubits long, five cubits high, and six cubits broad. These are the dimensions this bishop has given, which in measure of twelve inches to a foot, is 78 feet 9 inches long, 10 feet 6 inches broad, and 8 feet 3 inches thick, and contains 7,234 cubic feet. I now go to demonstrate the imposition of this bishop.

A cubic foot of water weighs sixty-two pounds and a half—the specific gravity of marble to water is as 2½ is to one. The weight, therefore, of a cubic foot of marble is 156 pounds, which, multiplied by 7,234, the number of cubic feet in one of those stones, makes the weight

The book of Exodus, in instituting the Jewish passover, in which they were to eat a he-lamb or a he-goat, says, chapter xii., verse 5: "Your lamb be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it from the sheep or from the goats."

The book after stating some ceremonies to be used in killing and dressing it (for it was to be roasted, not boiled) says, verse 43: "And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no stranger eat thereof; but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof, a foreigner and hired servant shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house, *neither shall ye brake a bone thereof.*"

We here see that the case as it stands in Exodus is a ceremony and not a prophesy, and totally unconnected with Jesus's bones, or any part of him.

John having thus filled up the measure of apostolic fable, concludes his book with something that beats all fable; for he says in the last verse: "And there are many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every-one *I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.*"

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of it to be 1,128,504 pounds, which is 503 tons. Allowing, then, a horse to draw about half-a-ton, it will require a thousand horses to draw one such stone on the ground; how, then, were they to be lifted into the building by human hands?

The bishop may talk of faith removing mountains, but all the faith of all the bishops that ever lived could not remove one of those stones, and their bodily strength given in.

This bishop also tells of great guns used by the Turks at the taking of Constantinople, one of which he says was drawn by seventy yoke of oxen, and by two thousand men. Vol. iii., page 117.

The weight of a cannon that carries a ball of 48 pounds, which is the largest cannon that is cast, weighs 8,000 pounds, about three tons and a half, and may be drawn by three yoke of oxen. Anybody may now calculate what the weight of the bishop's great gun must be, that required seventy yoke of oxen to draw it. The bishop beats Gulliver.

When men give up the use of the divine gift of reason in writing on any subject, be it religious or anything else, there are no bounds to their extravagance, no limit to their absurdities.

The three volumes which this bishop has written on what he calls the prophesies, contain about 1,200 pages, and he says in vol. iii., page 117, "I have studied brevity." This is as marvellous as the bishop's great gun.

This is what in vulgar life is called a *thumper*—that is, not only a lie, but a lie beyond the line of possibility; besides which, it is an absurdity, for if they should be written in the world, the world would contain them. Here ends the examination of passages called prophesies.

I have now, reader, gone through and examined all the passages which the four books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, quote from the Old Testament, and call them prophesies of Jesus Christ. When I first sat down to this examination, I expected to find cause for some censure, but little did I expect to find them so utterly destitute of truth, and all pretensions to it, as I have shown them to be.

The practice which the writers of those books employ is not more false than it is absurd. They state some trifling case of the person they call Jesus Christ, and then cut out a sentence from some passage of the Old Testament, and call it a prophesy of that case. But when the words thus cut out are restored to the place they are taken from, and read with the words before and after them, they give the lie to the New Testament. A short instance or two of this will suffice for the whole.

They make Joseph to dream of an angel, who informs him that Herod is dead, and tells him to come with the child out of Egypt. They then cut out a sentence from the book of Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," and apply it as a prophesy in that case.

The words: "And called my Son out of Egypt," are in the Bible; but what of that? They are only part of a passage, and not a whole passage, and stand immediately connected with other words, which show that they refer to the children of Israel coming out of Egypt in the time of Pharaoh, and to the idolatry they committed afterwards.

Again, they tell us that the soldiers came to break the legs of the crucified persons, they found that Jesus was already dead, and therefore did not break his. They then, with some alteration of the original, cut a sentence from Exodus, "A bone of him shall not be broken," and apply it as a prophesy of that case.

The words, "Neither shall ye brake a bone thereof" (for they have altered the text), are in the Bible; but what of that? They are, as in the former case, only part of a passage, and not a whole passage; and, when read with the words they are immediately joined to, show it is the

bones of a he-lamb or a he-goat of which the passage speaks.

These repeated forgeries and falsifications create a well-founded suspicion, that all the cases spoken of concerning the person called Jesus Christ are *made cases*, on purpose to lug in, and that very clumsily, some broken sentences from the Old Testament, and apply them as prophesies of those cases; and that so far from his being the Son of God he did not exist even as a man—that he is merely an imaginary or allegorical character, as Apollo, Hercules, Jupiter, and all the deities of antiquity were. There is no history written at the time Jesus Christ is said to have lived that speaks of the existence of such a person, even as a man.

Did we find in any other book pretending to give a system of religion, the falsehoods, falsifications, contradictions, and absurdities, which are to be met with in almost every page of the Old and New Testament, all the priests of the present day who supposed themselves capable, would triumphantly show their skill in criticisms and cry it down as a most glaring imposition. But since the books in question belong to their own trade and profession, they, or at least many of them, seek to stifle every inquiry into them, and abuse those who have the honesty and the courage to do it.

When a book, as is the case with the Old and New Testament, is ushered into the world under the title of being the *Word of God*, it ought to be examined with the utmost strictness, in order to know if it has a well-founded claim to that title or not, and whether we are, or are not, imposed upon; for as no poison is so dangerous as that which poisons the physic, so no falsehood is so fatal as that which is made an article of faith.

This examination becomes more necessary, because when the New Testament was written, I might say invented, the art of printing was not known, and there were no other copies of the Old Testament than written copies. A written copy of that book would cost about as much as six hundred common printed Bibles now cost. Consequently the books were in the hands but of very few persons, and these chiefly of the Church. This gave an opportunity to the writers of the New Testament to make quotations from the Old Testament as they pleased, and call them prophesies, with very little danger of being detected. Besides which, the terrors and inquisitorial fury of the Church, like what they tell us

of the flaming sword that turned every way, stood sentry over the New Testament; and time, which brings everything else to light, has served to thicken the darkness that guards it from detection.

Were the New Testament now to appear for the first time, every priest of the present day would examine it line by line, and compare the detached sentences it calls prophesies with the whole passages in the Old Testament, from whence they are taken. Why, then, do they not make the same examination at this time, as they would make had the New Testament never appeared before? If it be proper and right to make it in one case, it is equally proper and right to do it in the other case. Length of time can make no difference in the right to do it at any time. But, instead of doing this, they go on as their predecessors went on before them, to tell the people there are prophesies of Jesus Christ, when the truth is, there are none.

They tell us that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. It is very easy to say so; a great lie is as easily told as a little one. But if he had done so, those would have been the only circumstances respecting him that would have differed from the common lot of man; and, consequently, the only case that would apply exclusively to him, as prophesy, would be some passage in the Old Testament that foretold such things of him. But there is not a passage in the Old Testament that speaks of a person who, after being crucified, dead, and buried, should rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven. Our prophesy-mongers supply the silence of the Old Testament guards upon such things, by telling us of passages they call prophesies, and that falsely so, about Joseph's dream, old clothes, broken bones, and such-like trifling stuff.

In writing upon this, as upon every other subject, I speak a language full and intelligible. I deal not in hints and intimations. I have several reasons for this. First, that I may be clearly understood. Secondly, that it may be seen I am in earnest; and, thirdly, because it is an affront to truth to treat falsehood with complaisance.

I will close this treatise with a subject I have already touched upon in the first part of the "Age of Reason."

The world has been amused with the term *revealed religion*, and the generality of priests apply this term to the books called the Old and New Testament. The Mahometans apply the same term to the Koran. There is no man tha

believes in revealed religion stronger than I do; but it is not in the reveries of the Old and New Testament, nor of the Koran, that I dignify with that sacred title. That which is revelation to me exists in something which no human mind can invent, no human hand can counterfeit or alter.

The *word of God* is the *Creation* we behold; and this word of God revealeth to man all that is necessary for him to know of his Creator.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of his creation.

Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed.

Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth.

Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful.

Do we want to contemplate his will, so far as it respects man? The goodness he shows to all is a lesson for our conduct to each other.

In fine, Do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, or any impostor invent; but the Scripture called the Creation.

When, in the First Part of the "Age of Reason," I called the Creation the true revelation of God to man, I did not know that any other person had expressed the same idea. But I lately met with the writings of Dr. Conyers Middleton, published the beginning of last century, in which he expresses himself in the same manner with respect to the Creation, as I have done in the "Age of Reason."

He was principal librarian of the University of Cambridge in England, which furnished him with extensive opportunities of reading, and necessarily required he should be well acquainted with the dead as well as the living languages. He was a man of strong original mind; had the courage to think for himself, and the honesty to speak his thoughts.

He made a journey to Rome, from whence he wrote letters to show that the forms and ceremonies of the Romish Christian church were taken from the degenerate state of the heathen mythology, as it stood in the latter times of the Greeks and Romans. He attacked without ceremony the miracles which the church pretended to perform; and in

one of his treatises he calls the *Creation a revelation.* The priests of England of that day, in order to defend their citadel by first defending its out-works, attacked him for attacking the Romish ceremonies; and one of them censures him for calling *Creation a revelation.* He thus replies to him:

"One of them," says he, "appears to be scandalised by the title of *revelation*, which I have given to that discovery which God made of himself in the visible works of his Creation. Yet it is no other than what the wise in all ages have given to it, who consider it as the most authentic and indisputable revelation which God has ever given of himself, from the beginning of the world to this day. It was this by which the first notice of him was revealed to the inhabitants of the earth, and by which alone it has been kept up ever since among the several nations of it. From this the reason of man was enabled to trace out his nature and attributes, and, by a gradual deduction of consequences, to learn his own nature also, with all the duties belonging to it which relate either to God or to his fellow-creatures. This constitution of things was ordained by God as an universal law or rule of conduct to man—the source of all his knowledge—the test of all truth, by which all subsequent revelations which are *supposed* to have been given by God in any other manner must be tried, and cannot be received as divine any further than as they are found to tally and coincide with this original standard.

"*It* was this divine law which I referred to in the passage above recited (meaning the passage on which they had attacked him), being desirous to excite the reader's attention to it, as it would enable him to judge more freely of the argument I was handling. For by contemplating this law, he would discover the genuine way which God himself has marked out to us for the acquisition of true knowledge: not from the authority or reports of our fellow-creatures, but from the information of the facts and material objects which, in his providential distribution of worldly things, he hath presented to the perpetual observation of our senses. For as it was from these that his existence and nature, the most important articles of all knowledge, were first discovered to man, so that grand discovery furnished new light towards tracing out the rest, and made all the inferior subjects of human knowledge more easily discoverable to us by the same method.

"I had another view likewise in the same passages, and

applicable to the same end, of giving the reader a more enlarged notion on the question in dispute, who, by turning his thoughts, to reflect on the works of the Creator, as they are manifested to us in this fabric of the world, could not fail to observe, that they are all of them great, noble, and suitable to the majesty of his nature, carrying with them the proofs of their origin, and showing themselves to be th production of an all-wise and almighty Being; and b accustoming his mind to these sublime reflections, he wi be prepared to determine whether those miraculous inter positions so confidently affirmed to us by the primitive Fathers can reasonably be thought to make a part in the grand scheme of the divine administration, or whether it be agreeable that God, who created all things by his will, and can give what turn to them he pleases by the same will, should, for the particular purposes of his government and the services of the Church, *descend to the expedient of visions and revelations*, granted sometimes to boys for the instruction of the elders, and sometimes to women to settle the fashion and length of their veils, and sometimes to pastors of the Church to enjoin them to ordain one man a lecturer, another a priest; or that he should scatter a profusion of miracles around the stake of a martyr, yet all of them vain and insignificant, and without any sensible effect, either of preserving the life, or easing the sufferings of the saint; or even of mortifying his persecutors who were always left to enjoy the full triumph of their cruelty, and the poor martyr to expire in a miserable death. When these things, I say, are brought to the original test, and compared with the genuine and indisputable works of the Creator, how minute, how trifling, how contemptible must they be! and how incredible must it be thought, that for the instruction of his church God should employ ministers so precarious and unsatisfactory and inadequate, as the ecstacies of women and boys, and the visions of interested priests, which were derided at the very time by men of sense to whom they were proposed!

"That this universal law (continues Middleton, meaning the law revealed in the works of the Creation) was actually revealed to the heathen world long before the gospel was known, we learn from all the principal sages of antiquity, who made it the capital subject of their studies and writings.

"Cicero (says Middleton) has given us a short abstract of it in a fragment still remaining from one of his books on

government, which (says Middleton) I shall here transcribe in his own words, as they will illustrate my sense also in the passages that appear so dark and dangerous to my antagonist.

"'The true law (it is Cicero who speaks) is right reason conformable to the nature of things, constant, eternal, diffused through all, which calls us to duty by commanding, deters us from sin by forbidding; which never loses its influence with the good, nor ever preserves it with the wicked. . This law cannot be overruled by any other, nor abrogated in whole or in part; nor can we be absolved from it either by the senate or by the people, nor are we to seek any other comment or interpreter of it but itself; nor can there be one law at Rome, and another at Athens—one now and another hereafter; but the same eternal immutable law comprehends all nations, at all times, under one common master and governor of all—GOD. He is the inventor, propounder, enactor of this law; and whoever will not obey it must first renounce himself and throw off the nature of man; by doing which he will suffer the greatest punishments, though he should escape all the other torments which are commonly believed to be prepared for the wicked.' Here ends the quotation from Cicero.

"Our doctors (continues Middleton) perhaps will look on this as RANK DEISM: but, let them call it what they will, I shall ever avow and defend it as the fundamental, essential, and vital part of all true religion." Here ends the quotation from Middleton.

I have here given the reader two sublime extracts from men who lived in ages of time far remote from each other, but who thought alike. Cicero lived before the time in which they tell us Christ was born. Middleton may be called a man of our own time, as he lived within the same century with ourselves.

In Cicero we see that vast superiority of mind, that sublimity of right reasoning and justness of ideas which man acquires, not by studying Bibles and Testaments, and the theology of schools built thereon, but by studying the Creator in the immensity and unchangeable order of his Creation, and the immutability of his law. *There cannot*, says Cicero, *be one law now, and another hereafter, but the same eternal, immutable law comprehends all nations at all times, under one common master and governor of all*—GOD. But according to the doctrine of schools which priests have set up, we see one law, called the Old Testament, given in

one age of the world, and another law, called the New Testament, given in another age of the world. As all this is contradictory to the eternal, immutable nature, and the unerring and unchangeable wisdom of God, we must be compelled to hold this doctrine to be false, and the old and the new law, called the Old and the New Testament, to be impositions, fables, and forgeries.

In Middleton we see the manly eloquence of an enlarged mind, and the genuine sentiments of a true believer in his Creator. Instead of reposing his faith on books, by whatever name they may be called, whether Old Testament or New, he fixes the Creation as the great original standard by which every other thing called the word or work of God is to be tried. In this we have an indisputable scale whereby to measure every word or work imputed to him. If the thing so imputed carries not in itself the evidence of the same almightiness of power, of the same unerring truth and wisdom, and the same unchangeable order in all its parts, as are visibly demonstrated to our senses, and comprehensible by our reason, in the magnificent fabric of the universe, that word or that work is not of God. Let, then, the books called the Old and New Testament be tried by this rule, and the result will be that the authors of them, whoever they were, will be convicted of forgery.

The invariable principles and unchangeable order which regulate the movements of all the parts that compose the universe, demonstrate, both to our senses and our reason, that its Creator is a God of unerring truth. But the Old Testament, beside the numberless absurd and bagatelle stories it tells of God, represents him as a God of deceit, a God not to be confided in. Ezekiel makes God to say, chapter xiv., verse 9: "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet." And at the 20th chapter, verse 25, he makes God, in speaking of the children of Israel, to say, "Wherefore I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." This, so far being the word of God, is horrid blasphemy against him. Reader, put thy confidence in thy God, and put no trust in the Bible.

The same Old Testament, after telling us that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, makes the same almighty power and eternal wisdom employ itself in giving directions how a priest's garments should be cut, and what sort of stuff they should be made of, and what their offerings

should be—gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, &c., chapter xxv,, verse 3; and in one of the pretended prophesies I have just examined, God is made to give directions how they should kill, cook, and eat a he-lamb or a he-goat, And Ezekiel, chapter iv., to fill up the measure of abominable absurdity, makes God to order him to take "wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and fitchets, and make thee bread thereof, and bake it with human dung and eat it;" but as Ezekiel complained that this mass was too strong for his stomach, the matter was compromised from men's dung to cow-dung, Ezekiel, chapter iv. Compare all this ribaldry, blasphemously called the Word of God, with the Almighty power that created the universe, and whose eternal wisdom directs and governs all its mighty movements, and we shall be at a loss to find a name sufficiently contemptible for it.

In the promises which the Old Testament pretends that God made to his people, the same derogatory ideas of him prevail. It makes God to promise to Abraham, that his seed should be like the stars in heaven and the sand on the sea shore for the multitude, and that he would give them the land of Canaan as their inheritance for ever. But observe, reader, how the performance of this promise was to begin and then ask thine own reason, if the wisdom of God, whose power is equal to his will, could, consistently with that power and that wisdom, make such a promise.

The performance of the promise was to begin, according to that book, by 400 years of bondage and affliction. Genesis, chapter xv., verse 13. "And God said unto Abraham, Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them 400 years." This promise, then, to Abraham and his seed for ever to inherit the land of Canaan, had it been a fact instead of a fable, was to operate in the commencement of it, as a curse upon all the people and their children, and their children's children for 400 years.

But the case is, the book of Genesis was written after the bondage in Egypt had taken place; and, in order to get rid of the disgrace of the Lord's chosen people, as they call themselves, being in bondage to the Gentiles, they make God to be the author of it, and annex it as a condition to a pretended promise; as if God, in making that promise, had

exceeded his power in performing it, and, consequently, his wisdom in making it, and was obliged to compromise with them for one half, and with the Egyptians, to whom they were to be in bondage, for the other half.

Without degrading my own reason by bringing those wretched and contemptible tales into a comparative view with the Almighty power and eternal wisdom which the Creator hath demonstrated to our senses in the creation of the universe, I will confine myself to say, that if we compare them with the divine and forcible sentiments of Cicero, the result will be, that the human mind has degenerated by believing them. Man, in a state of grovelling superstition, from which he has not courage to rise, loses the energy of his mental powers.

I will not tire the reader with more observations on the Old Testament.

As to the New Testament, if it be brought and tried by that standard, which, as Middleton wisely says, God has revealed to our senses of his Almighty power and wisdom in the creation and government of the visible universe, it will be found equally as false, paltry, and absurd as the Old.

Without entering, in this place, into any other argument, that the story of Christ is of human invention, and not of divine origin, I will confine myself to show that it is derogatory to God, by the contrivance of it; because the means it supposes God to use are not adequate to the Almightiness of his power and the eternity of his wisdom.

The New Testament supposes that God sent his Son upon earth to make a new covenant with man, which the church calls *the convenant of Grace*, and to instruct mankind in a new doctrine, which it calls *faith*, meaning thereby, not faith in God, for Cicero and all true Deists always had and always will have this—but faith in the person called Jesus Christ, and that whoever had not this faith should, to us the words of the New Testament, be DAMNED.

Now, if this were a fact, it is consistent with that attribut of God called his *goodness*, that no time should be lost i letting poor unfortunate man know it: and as that goodness was united to Almighty power, and that power to Almighty wisdom, all the means existed in the hand of the Creator to make it known immediately over the whole earth, in a manner suitable to the Almightiness of his divine nature, and with evidence that would not leave man in doubt; for it is always incumbent upon us, in all cases, to believe that

the Almighty always acts, not by imperfect means, as imperfect man acts, but consistently with his Almightiness. It is this only that can become the infallible criterion by which we can possibly distinguish the works of God from the works of man.

Observe now, reader, how the comparison between this supposed mission of Christ, on the belief or disbelief of which they say man was to be saved or damned—observe, I say, how the comparison between this and the Almighty power and wisdom of God demonstrated to our senses in the visible creation, goes on.

The Old Testament tells us that God created the heavens and the earth, and everything therein, in six days. The term *six days*, is ridiculous enough when applied to God; but leaving out that absurdity, it contains the idea of Almighty power acting unitedly with Almighty wisdom, to produce an immense work, that of the creation of the universe and everything therein, in a short time.

Now, as the eternal salvation of man is of much greater importance than his creation, and as that salvation depends, as the New Testament tells us, on man's knowledge of and belief in the person called Jesus Christ, it necessarily follows from our belief in the goodness and justice of God, and our knowledge of his Almighty power and wisdom, as demonstrated in the creation, that ALL THIS, if true, would be made known to all parts of the world, in as little time, at least, as was employed in making the world. To suppose the Almighty would pay greater regard and attention to the creation and organisation of inanimate matter, than he would to the salvation of innumerable millions of souls, which himself had created "*as the image of himself*," is to offer an insult to his goodness and his justice.

Now, observe, reader, how the promulgation of this pretended salvation by a knowledge of and a belief in Jesus Christ went on, compared with the work of creation.

In the first place, it took longer time to make a child than to make the world, for nine months were passed away and totally lost in a state of pregnancy: which is more than forty times longer time than God employed in making the world, according to the Bible account. Secondly, several years of Christ's life were lost in a state of human infancy: but the universe was in maturity the moment it existed. Thirdly, Christ, as Luke asserts, was thirty years old before began to preach what they call his mission: millions of

souls died in the meantime without knowing it. Fourthly, it was above 300 years from that time before the book called the New Testament was compiled into a written copy, before which time there was no such book. Fifthly, it was above a thousand years after that, before it could be circulated, because neither Jesus nor his apostles had knowledge of, or were inspired with the art of printing: and consequently, as the means for making it universally known did not exist, the means were not equal to the end, and therefore it is not the work of God.

I will here subjoin the 19th Psalm, which is truly Deistical, to show how universally and instantaneously the works of God make themselves known, compared with this pretended salvation by Jesus Christ.

Psalm 19th—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there *is* nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Now, had the news of salvation by Jesus Christ been inscribed on the face of the sun and the moon, in characters that all nations would have understood, the whole earth had known it in twenty-four hours, and all nations would have believed it; whereas, though it is now almost 2,000 years since, as they tell us, Christ came upon earth, not a twentieth part of the people of the earth know anything of it, and among those who do, the wiser part do not believe it.

I have now, reader, gone through all the passages called the prophesies of Jesus Christ, and shown there is no such thing.

I have examined the story told of Jesus Christ, and compared the several circumstances of it with that revelation, which, as Middleton wisely says, God has made to of his power and wisdom in the structure of the universe, and by which everything ascribed to him is to be tried. The result is, that the story of Christ has not one trait, either in its character, or in the means employed, that bears the least resemblance to the power and wisdom of God, as demon-

strated in the creation of the universe. All the means are human means, slow, uncertain, and inadequate to the accomplishment of the end proposed; and therefore the whole is a fabulous invention, and undeserving of credit.

The priests of the present day profess to believe it. They gain their living by it, and they exclaim against something they call infidelity. I will define what it is. HE THAT BELIEVES IN THE STORY OF CHRIST IS AN INFIDEL TO GOD.

CONTRADICTORY DOCTRINES BETWEEN MATTHEW AND MARK.

In the New Testament, Mark, chapter xvi., verse 16, it is said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is making salvation, or, in other words, the happiness of man after this life, to depend entirely on believing; or on what Christians call faith.

But the 25th chapter of *The Gospel according to Matthew* makes Jesus Christ to preach a direct contrary doctrine to *The Gospel according to Mark;* for it makes salvation or the future happiness of man, to depend entirely on *good works;* and those good works are not good works done to God, for he needs them not, but good works done to man.

The passage referred to in Matthew is the account there given of what is called the last day, or the day of judgment, where the whole world is represented to be divided into two parts, the righteous and the unrighteous, metaphorically called the *sheep* and the *goats.*

To the part, called the righteous, or the sheep, it says, "Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Here is nothing about believing in Christ—nothing about that phantom of the imagination called *faith*. The works here spoken of are works of humanity and benevolence, or, in other words, an endeavor to make God's creation happy. Here is nothing about preaching and making long prayers, as if God must be dictated to by man: nor about building churches and meetings, nor hiring priests to pray and preach in them. Here is nothing about predestination, that lust which some men have for damning one another. Here is nothing about baptism, whether by sprinkling or plunging; nor about any of those ceremonies for which the Christian church has been fighting, persecuting, and burning each other, ever since the Christian church began.

If it be asked, Why do not the priests preach the doctrine contained in this chapter? the answer is easy—they are not fond of practising it themselves. It does not answer for their trade. They had rather get than give. Charity with them begins and ends at home.

Had it been said, Come, ye blessed; ye have been liberal in paying the preachers of the word, ye have contributed largely towards building churches and meeting-houses, there is not a hired priest in Christendom but would have thundered it continually in the ears of his congregation. But as it is altogether on good works done to men, the priests pass it over in silence, and they will abuse me for bringing it into notice.

PRIVATE THOUGHTS OF A FUTURE STATE.

I HAVE said, in the first part of the "Age of Reason," that "I hope for happiness after this life." This hope is comfortable to me, and I presume not to go beyond the comfortable idea of hope, with respect to a future state.

I consider myself in the hands of my Creator, that he will dispose of me after this life consistently with his justice and goodness. I leave all these matters to him as my Creator and friend, and I hold it to be presumption in man to make an article of faith as to what the Creator will do with us hereafter.

I do not believe, because a man and a woman make a child, that it imposes on the Creator the unavoidable obligation of keeping the being so made in eternal existence hereafter. It is in his power to do so, or not to do so, and it is not in our power to decide which he will do.

The book called the New Testament, which I hold to be fabulous, and have shown to be false, gives an account, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, of what is there called the last day, or the day of judgment. The whole world, according to the account, is divided into two parts, the righteous and the unrighteous, figuratively called the sheep and the goats. They are then to receive their sentence. To the one, figuratively called the sheep, it says, "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the other, figuratively called the goats, it says, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Now the case is, the world cannot be thus divided—the moral world, like the physical world, is composed of numerous degrees of character, running imperceptibly one into another, in such a manner that no fixed point of division can be found in either, that point is nowhere or is everywhere. The whole world might be divided into two parts, numerically, but not as to moral character; and therefore the metaphor of dividing them, as sheep and goats can be divided, whose difference is marked by their external figure, is absurd. All sheep are still sheep; all goats are still goats; it is their physical nature to be so. But one part of the world are not all good alike, nor the other part all wicked alike. There are some exceedingly good; others exceedingly wicked. There is another description of men who cannot be ranked with either the one or the other. They belong neither to the sheep nor the goats; and there is still another description of them, who are so very insignificant both in character and conduct, as not to be worth the trouble of damning or saving, or of raising from the dead.

My own opinion is, that those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavoring to make their fellow-mortals happy—for this is the only way in which we can serve God—*will be happy hereafter;* and that the very wicked will meet with some punishment. But those who are neither good nor bad, or are not too insignificant for notice, will be dropped entirely. This is my opinion. It is consistent with my idea of God's justice, and with the reason that God has given me, and I gratefully know he has given me a large share of that divine gift.

THE END.

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